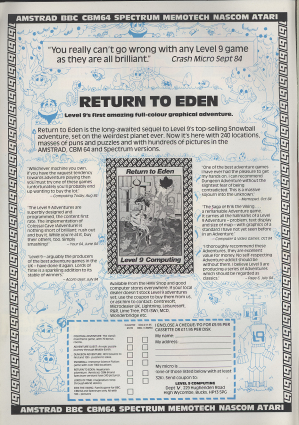


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– Page 6, July 84
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EDITORIAL

'GULLY FOYLE IS my name, Terra is my nation, Deep space is my dwelling place, Death's my destination.' If these words seem familiar, then you are likely to have read Alfred Bester's *Tiger, Tiger*.

For those of you unfamiliar with the book, *Tiger, Tiger* (released in the US under the title *The Stars My Destination)* concerns the exploits of one Gully Foyle, third-rate deckhand on a space cruiser. Captured and set adrift, Gully Foyle discovers how to jaunt (teleport) in space and become the hottest property in nine planets. Soon, he finds himself heading for the outer reaches of the solar system, hotly pursued by all manner of villains.

This scenario, and a hundred others just like it, have been translated to the micro screen in *Elite*, Acornsoft's latest blockbuster for the BBC. The game, which is an admirable synthesis of arcade and strategy, is in essence a simple version of *Kingdom*. As the commander of a tramp cargo trader, you must travel from world to world buying and selling a range of goods from simple agricultural produce to dangerous illegal narcotics. Just to make things more interesting, you must fight off the attentions of both pirates and police.

What makes *Elite* stand out from the average game is the way in which the arcade action is integrated with the strategy elements. In order to buy and sell different goods, you must travel from one planet to another. This means you must master the controls of your ship before you can attempt to play the game at all. The satellite docking sequence, in particular, can cause immense frustration.

But, once the mechanics of piloting your craft have been solved, you can concentrate on building up your bank balance to the point where you can buy the additional firepower necessary to blast your opponents out of the sky. The choice of destination and goods to be transported thus becomes increasingly important.

A simple enough game, but very, very, effective. I can't wait for it to be converted to other machines.

LETTERS

Send your hints, successes, complaints and compliments to Letters Page, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2R 3LD

Adventure

I READ Robert Kingsley's article on 'First Adventure' in the present edition of *Micro Adventurer* with great interest.

I think I have a copy of the 550 point *Adventure* game you referred to. It certainly has an ogre, singing sword and magic mushroom.

I obtained it from the CP/M Users Group UK. It therefore needs a CP/M machine to run it. It has four data files, 155K in all, and a 36K COM file. As every time you enter a move the data files have to be read I run the whole game on RAM disk (I have a Nascom 2). This saves time and a lot of wear on drives and ears.

The CP/M Users Group UK live at 72 Mill Road, Hawley, Dartford, Kent, DA2 7RZ. Membership is £7.50 p.a. with a quarterly newsletter. There is a huge library of over 250 disc volumes of software, all in the public domain ie no copyright. Each volume costs £2.00 if you send a blank disc.

I think they also have the game *Dungeon* you referred to. This is a three volume set.

I have had hours of enjoyable frustration trying to solve *Adventure*. The most points I have got is 195, some treasure being lost to the pirate. However, I am stuck! I can't get past the ogre, or across the quicksand. I can't open the safe or the clam. The dark passage leading from the Plover room seems to be a dead end if I avoid the pit. Is it a red herring?

I would be grateful for some hints.

Dr D Plews
SHO Medicine for the Elderly
Airedale General Hospital
Steeton
Keighley
BD20 6TD

encore

EUREKA!?

Someone else on this planet has heard of *Adventure 2*.

I have been in possession of a CP/M version for some time, and together with a colleague have been bashing my head against brick walls trying to fathom some of the more (or less) complex problems which are posed.

Just as a taster, we have currently managed 352 points out of the 550 total, and would be interested to hear from anyone who knows more, or indeed anyone who has a copy of the game who would like some assistance with it!

The name on the credits is Mike Goetz, who judging by his 'phone number must live somewhere in the states, but again, if anyone out there knows more, I'd like to share their wisdom.

I shan't go into any detail about the differences between the "Classic" version, suffice to say that once you've played *Adventure 2*, the other versions seem to be lacking something.

I should also add that as far as I know the game isn't available for home micros: one of it's data files takes a trifling 192K (no misprint).

If anyone out there has a CP/M micro, and wants to know more, then feel free to contact me.

Happy Adventuring,
Tim Nicholson
37 Station Road
Pelsall
Walsall
West Midlands

Lone Wolf bites back

HAVING just read Peter Berlin's review of game books in Linefeed (*Micro Adventurer* October), I feel his criticisms of the *Lone Wolf* books are both inaccurate and misleading. I am a keen games book fan, having bought and played the majority of those on the market, and in my opinion the *Lone Wolf* series is 'state of the art'.

Mr Berlin claims that there are far too many unavoidable deaths and too much 'padding'. He obviously missed the subtle clues that this "padding" contains, for both my friends and I have successfully completed *Flight from the Dark* and *Fire on the Water* by taking note of these clues.

His most misleading criticism of all, that you need one particular Kai Discipline if the climax to *Fire on the Water* is not to become a damp squib, is laughable. The magical Sommerswerd adds 10 points to your combat skills if you have the correct Kai Discipline, and eight if you do not; hardly an anti climax!

Alan Warner

Collared

I'M WORKING on Level 9's *Dungeon Adventure* at present. I've got quite a long way through it, but need help on a few points.

How do I deal with the goat, the dragon, and the executioner, and where are all the blue, violet, indigo and red collars? (I'm assuming there are those colour collars!) Is there another source of light apart from the driftwood?

I would very much like to hear from other adventurers who are working on this adventure — I may be able to solve a few of their problems.

I can offer help on *Waxworks, Feasibility Experiment, Collossal Cave* and *Lords of Time* if anyone wants to write with a stamped addressed envelope.

Adventurers are a friendly bunch — my phone bills have rocketed since sharing problems with a fellow adventurer in Liverpool!

In answer to your question in the November issue — yes, I would like to see Your Adventures and Adventure File back — and a great deal more space for Tony Bridge!

Irene Feeney
16 Surrey Way
Laindon West
Basildon
Essex
SS15 6PS

Help!

AFTER conquering the Bulbous Eyes in *The Hobbit* (with the help of your magazine) I am well on the way to solving this game.

I would be pleased to help anyone with *Arrow of Death Part One, Golden Baton*, and *Urban Upstart*, and the first part of *The Hobbit*. Please write enclosing an SSAE.

If anyone can help in *Espionage Island, Arrow of Death Part Two*, and the location of Drapnir in *Valhalla* (is it in Hell?), I would be grateful. All the above games are on the 48K Spectrum.

Emma Pawson
12 Taywood Close
Poulton
Lancs

Binders

I WOULD like to buy some binders for back issues of Micro Adventurer — can you tell me the price?

B S Beattie

We do not have any at present. How many other readers are interested?

Club complaint

YOUR News Desk section for March contained information concerning an 'International Adventure Club', which also seems to have been called Adventure Zone Software. A main feature was to be an adventure help service, so largely for this reason I paid a £5.00 membership fee.

I sent off a cheque in June to cover a program, *Pettigrew's Diary*, and a dustcover for a BBC. I heard nothing for six weeks, so I wrote to them. Two weeks later, a cassette arrived, but no dustcover. About two weeks ago, I wrote again, but have not had a reply. In fact, I have had no information since June, and a request for adventure help seems to have been totally ignored.

J Holden

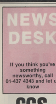
We contacted the International Adventure Club on behalf of Mr Holden and other readers. According to Simon Clarke, President of the IAC, the staff have been dealing with a backlog of mail caused by a competition on Prestel which offered 100 free subscriptions to the club. Apparently, over 750 entries were received.

Adventure Zone Software, Mr Clarke says, is no longer connected with the IAC, having been taken over by Zone Transglobal Industries International. Mr Clarke has no connection with the administration of Adventure Zone, although he is on the board of directors.



From the Ruins of
Blasted Ushgarak
I pledge that the Moonprince's
triumph be short lived
Shareth my daughter will
lure him to
her frozen Empire and
to his doom.
This I vow for this is
Doomdark's Revenge





Mosaic release Erik the Nomad Rat



Terry Jones bites Jim Saunders, Mosaic's technical manager

MOSAIC has produced three new bookware packages — *Erik the Viking, The Stainless Steel Rat Saves the World, and The Nomad of Time.*

Nomad is based on the Oswald Bastable trilogy written by Michael Moorcock, and the player has to navigate an airship around the world, searching for the gate to other dimensions, in a desperate race to save the world.

Strangely enough, *The Stainless Steel Rat* involves Harry Harrison's hero in a journey through time to save the world.

Both games were programmed by Shards.

Erik the Viking is based on the book by Monty Python star Terry Jones, and was programmed by Level 9.

The Stainless Steel Rat is the only one of the three packages that actually contains the book the game is based on; the other two have extracts printed in the instructions booklet.

Vicky Carne, Mosaic's managing director, believes that *Erik* "has far more general appeal than the previous books we have done.

"Erik is so different," she says, "with the Terry Jones — Monty Python link. And Level 9 have done a great game.

"Next year we are looking at more general books," she admits; "not necessarily children's books, but moving away from a concentration on science fiction."

Erik is available for the Spectrum 48K, Commodore 64 and BBC B. *The Stainless Steel Rat* and *Nomads* are for the CBM 64. All three cost £9.95.

CCS

CASES Computer Simulations has published the winning entries to the Cambridge Awards. First placed was a four player interactive adventure called *The Prince*, which retails at £7.95.

Of the four runners up, one, *1942 Mission*, is an adventure based set in World War Two Germany. It was written by Tom Frost of Angus, who is a contributor to *Micro Adventurer*.

Two of the other three games are wargames — *Insurgency* and *War Zone* — and the third is a seafaring simulation, called *Blue Riband*. All four sell for £5.95.

In addition to those titles, CCS has also released *The Staff of Zaranol* and *Air Defence*, an adventure and a strategy game respectively, at £5.95, and two adventures, *Broodslayer* and *Golden Cobra*, in the Charlie Charlie Sugar budget range at £2.99.

All CCS games are for the Spectrum 48K. *War Zone* has also just been released on the Amstrad CPC 464 at £6.95.



Eureka launched

EUREKA was finally launched onto the public on October 31, after a prolonged media campaign covering national press and television.

While the appeal of five text and graphic adventures for £14.95 may be attracting some hardcore adventurers, most of the thousands of orders received by publishers Domark will be from people attracted by the massive £25000 prize offered to the first person intelligent enough to solve all five games and the riddles in the handbook, and ring the secret phone number.

At the launch, Mark Strachan of Domark made the phone call that released the game while partner Dominic Wheatley looked on.

"Dominic and I know absolutely nothing about computer games," he announced, "but we know a great deal about marketing."

"We asked people what they wanted from an adventure game, and the consensus was some sort of reward for solving it."

October 29 was the launch date for the French version of *Eureka*, which was apparently the biggest software launch France has ever seen. The game has also been released in the US, Canada, South Africa, Australia, Scandinavia, and the rest of Europe. Every country has its own specific prize to win.

Eureka is for the Spectrum 48K and Commodore 64, at £14.95.





Elite auction

ELITE, the smash hit space simulation and trading game from Acornsoft, will be available for micros other than the BBC and Electron. The rights to produce other versions of the game will be auctioned off in November by Jacqui Lyons, the software agent representing the two Cambridge undergraduates who wrote the game.

"It's the first time that software rights have been auctioned off in this way," she says, "and it has attracted a great deal of attention."

David Johnson Davies, Acornsoft's managing director, confirmed that the company will be spending £50,000 promoting *Elite* in the months before Christmas, including advertising on TV.

So far, 55 people have gained *Elite* status, and been awarded the handsome black and silver badge that goes with this highest rank.

David Braben (l) and Ian Bell, Elite authors

Avalon Hill Eclipsed

FIVE GAMES originally published by Avalon Hill in America have been released in this country by Longman's new software label, Eclipse.

Three are strategy games. *Legionnaire* is a real time wargame in which the player commands Roman legions against any one of a dozen barbarian tribes. *London Blitz* is a strategic game about bomb disposal, and *Andromeda Conquest* is Science Fiction.

The other two titles are both adventures. *Telengard* involves one or more players in a semi roleplaying game, set in a great underground labyrinth. *Ripper* is a detective adventure featuring the search for the Victorian mass murderer.

All five games are for the Commodore 64. *Ripper* is on disc only at £14.95; the other four are on cassette at £9.95. Nowhere near the £30 or more that the original imported games cost!

Amstrad Eden

LEVEL 9 has now released not one, but six adventures for the Amstrad CPC464.

The latest is *Return to Eden*, the sequel to the ever popular *Snowball*.

Colossal Adventure, Dungeon Adventure, Adventure Quest, Snowball, and *Lords of Time* are also available for the Amstrad.

All Level 9 tapes are £9.95.

Mud on menu

MUD is now up and running on Compunet, and available to those people with Compunet modems.

If you have Compunet, GOTO 200, and you will see MUD on the menu.

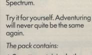
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Dec the halls for Christmas

*Christmas in the Land of Mud is a time for thanksgiving and mass slaughter — **Richard Bartle** reports*

CHRISTMASTIDE is generally regarded by *MUD* players as a fun time for one and all. No-one goes about maliciously attacking other players (especially if there is a wiz watching to stop them!), and even the most paranoid of players have been known to join in for a chorus of *The Twelve Days of Christmas* without fear of someone stealing their broadsword while they stand still for long in the same place. The roots of this tradition lie in the days when *MUD* was enjoyed by a select band of students only, and the outside world had barely heard of the game. Then, at the end of term, with all assignments out of the way and three days before they went home, the *MUD* devotees would all get together for an afternoon-long session of good cheer, before they disappeared off to their respective parental homes in sunny Huddersfield or wherever, for a month of *MUD*lessness.

In order to promote goodwill to all mankind, *MUD* has a special room called the Christmas Box (or XMASBX in its abbreviated form), which only wizards and witches can enter, as it lies in its own half-world, inaccessible from the domain of mortals. For 50 weeks of the year the room is left unvisited, gathering dust and forgotten by one and all. Only for the middle two weeks of December do memories stir, and a wiz will venture into the XMASBX to see if all is well. And then, mortals will notice a subtle change in the game . . .

The XMASBX, you see, contains everyting you need for a merry Christmas, and the wizs liberally distribute the loot around The Land for players to stumble across and drop in the swamp, in order to score the generous number of points which the presents are worth. Everything you are likely to need to make Christmas festive is there. There is holly ("not decking the hall"), a candle, a snowman ("trying very hard not to melt"), a cracker, and a wealth of other things. Of course there is a beautiful Christmas tree, decorated in pretty lights and baubles, which usually winds up stuck in the pine forests to the south of *MUD*, where unsuspecting adventurers suddenly find it looming through the trees at them.

Some of the objects (all of which have been there for at least three years) have uses other than merely being treasure. The Christmas bell which "plays its old familiar carols here" can actually be hit, sending a -D-O-N-G- reverberating throughout The Land. If you don't want to DONG it, you can DING it, and everyone gets a -D-I-N-G- echoing on their screen. Sometimes some quite tuneful-looking melodies can be played, until someone on 110 baud who can't get a word in edgeways manages to steal the wretched item and drop it in the swamp out of harm's way!

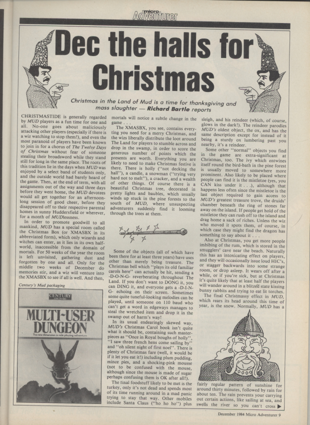
In its usual endearingly skewed way, *MUD's* Christmas Carol book isn't quite what it should be, containing such masterpieces as "Once in Royal boughs of holly", "I saw three french hens come sailing by" and "oh silent night of first noel". There is plenty of Christmas fare (well, it would be if it let you eat it!) including plum pudding, mince pies, and a shocking-pink mousse (not to be confused with the mouse, although since the mouse is made of sugar perhaps confusing them is OK after all!).

The final foodstuff likely to be met is the turkey, only it's not dead and spends most of its time running around in a mad panic trying to stay that way. Other mobiles include Santa Claus ("ho ho ho") plus sleigh, and his reindeer (which, of course, glows in the dark!). The reindeer parodies *MUD's* oldest object, the ox, and has the same description except for instead of it being a sturdy ox lumbering past you nearby, it's a reindeer.

Some other "normal" objects you find in the game are extra-significant at Christmas, too. The ivy which entwines itself round the bird-bath in the pine forest is usually moved to somewhere more prominent. Also likely to be placed where people can find it is the mistletoe (yes, you CAN kiss under it . . .), although that happens less often since the mistletoe is the last object required to gain access to *MUD's* greatest treasure trove, the druids' chamber beneath the ring of stones far away on the island. If people get hold of the mistletoe they can rush off to the island and drag home a sack of riches. Unless the wiz who moved it spots them, of course, in which case they might find the dragon has something to say about it . . .

Also at Christmas, you get more people imbibing of the rum, which is stored in the smugglers' cave near the beach. Naturally this has an intoxicating effect on players, and they will occasionally issue loud HIC's, or stagger backwards into some strange room, or drop asleep. It wears off after a while, or if you're sick, but at Christmas it's quite likely that at least half the players will wander around in a blitzed state kissing bunny rabbits and trying to eat lit torches.

The final Christmassy effect in *MUD*, which rears its head around this time of year, is the snow. Normally, *MUD* has a fairly regular pattern of sunshine for around thirty minutes, followed by rain for about ten. The rain prevents your carrying out certain actions, like sailing at sea, and swells the river so you can't cross ▶



Century's Mud packaging



(which can cut off if you had to get the mistletoe, incidentally). At yuletide, however, the wizs who are full of the spirit of Christmas usually switch on the snow, which is just like the rain but lasts for longer. This can be something of a surprise to the mortals, who know exactly what rain is but don't really know what to make of snow. It's quite amusing watching them talk to each other ("What's this snow?" "Don't know, I just saw Father Christmas go by, and someone has given me this cracker . . .").

There is another Christmas-derived feature in *MUD*, which now has a more general appeal — the "spectacular". A spectacular (pronounced "specktackerler", after the welsh wizard, Evil, who coined the phrase but couldn't say it properly) is one almighty carnage, but tremendous fun! The idea is that you get as many people playing at once as you can manage (36 maximum), and put them all in together. You then "wizard lock" the game, to stop anyone else getting in, and give the word. Thereupon, they chase about after each other, killing and shouting and screaming as they go, until all but one is dead. This person is the winner, and receives 1000 points for every mortal who started the spectacular, plus some extra if the game crashed as a result of the actions of one of the spectating wizards.

Spectaculars are terrific to play, but hellishly difficult to organise! Quite apart from getting the players to come along at the same time (assuming the computer is up, too!) you have to re-arrange the locations of objects and things so that the fast typers don't get to the goodies first. Also, introducing the odd "new" monster, and hyping-up some of the old ones, can take time, if you want to do it right. Finding six different yet logical places to put the spare swords can be quite an exercise in itself! Still, the overall effect is well worth it (I hope!).

What normally happens is that the interval players get two or three terminals each (this being OK since everyone else has gone home for the hols) and go in with a like number of mortals. Two of them follow the third around, and when they meet someone they all join in the fray. Sometimes different players will gang up, so there might be gangs of six or eight scouring the countryside looking for hidden individuals. Externals, being slower moving, are quite often caught this way, although as the spectacular progresses the larger teams tend to get broken up by attacks on some of the "followers", and in the resulting attempt to rally forces other members of the group are picked off.

Wizs watching the game take a great delight in seeing what is happening. They cheer the brave ones, boo the cowards, and if people are scurrying around deep underground hoping everyone else will do the job for them, the wizs are likely to pick them up by the scruff of the neck and drop them in the thick of things — asleep! Everyone's game is logged into a different file, and at the end of the day these are printed off and a "report" is compiled, saying who was done over by whom at what time. The shortest period of time spent in a spectacular is reputed to be three seconds, when one of Gwyn the wizard's mortal personae typed EAST at the start instead of WEST, and left *MUD* into *VALLEY*, only to learn that he couldn't return . . .

Most of the hacking and slaying in spectaculars goes on in the mainland, but eventually there are only a few players left and they find it increasingly hard to catch each other (although the WHO command during a spectacular tells you what room your prey is in, instead of just what their name is). At this point, the wizards collar the survivors and move them to the ship. They also give them all weapons, in order to promote good bloodshed, and let them loose. The ship being only about nine rooms in total, this leaves little chance to escape, but it can be quite cramped. Recent spectaculars' endings have been moved to the island, further out to sea, where there is twice as much space and people get more say in who kills them!

Spectaculars now take place fairly often, late one evening at the end of term when Essex University's computer can take the load without inconveniencing anyone else. It's interesting to observe that they are quite different from the events which inspired their conception, and which still take place every Christmas in *MUD*. The year of feuding, fighting, paranoia is forgotten for just a few brief days prior to December 25th, and *MUD* players get together bound by a wave of camaraderie reminiscent of those First World War films where the Tommies and the Hun meet in No-Man's Land for a few, fleeting hours. A shame that it doesn't last the whole year round, but, as any wiz will tell you, there's only a certain amount of being nice that a body can stand, and two weeks seems quite long enough to last most *MUD* players for the rest of the year!

Merry Christmas, Happy new Year, and if you get a DECsystem-10 (cost: half a million quid) in your stocking let me know and I'll send you a tape with *MUD* on (and a begging letter!).

For those readers with a Commodore 64 and modem, *MUD* is now running on Compunet.

Readers without access to Compunet can get details of how to access *MUD* from Richard Bartle, Department of Computer Science, Essex University, Colchester, Essex CO4 3SQ. Remember to enclose an SAE.

SPECTACULARS have aided many people, but not all have reached wiz as a result. This is often because the battles were won by someone who already had a wiz persona, but was playing as a mortal for the sheer thrill of the kill (makes a nice change from being benevolent). A quick perusal of *MUD's* graveyard will reveal only one person who made it as a result — Felicity the witch. Her tombstone reads: "A spectacular life lead me here", and it did. The extra points were just about enough to get her to witch. Of course, for every success story there is a failure, and another player with a similar score to start with came second by a hair's breadth. And he lost the second spectacular by a similar margin, too, after killing 50% of the other players single-handed! Almost makes you believe in fate, doesn't it?

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***Sally Glover** takes on the Fourth Reich in Ram Jam's Valkyrie 17*

THE SUMMER of 1945 had the Nazi war-machine in its death throes. Desperately, the scientists of the Third Reich laboured to produce the super-weapons like the V2 rocket and the atom bomb which could snatch victory for Hitler's armies from the jaws of defeat. Fortunately, the allies were able to foil these plans with pre-emptive raids like those at Telemark and Peenemunde.

The full scale of German technology was only realised after the war when captured documents revealed just how close many of these terrible weapons were to operation.

Secret Nazi projects and treasures have often been the subject of novels and films but, to the best of my knowledge, *Valkyrie 17* is the first computer adventure based on this type of scenario.

The packaging of the game is very striking and features the insignia of *Valkyrie 17* in the black and red of the 'thousand year Reich'. This is reproduced inside the package in the form of a metal badge — which I thought was a nice touch to add realism and impress your friends etc.

It is clear that a great deal of thought has gone into the development of the game. This is very pleasing to see since many adventures with good potential are let down by lack of attention to detail — this certainly is NOT true of *Valkyrie 17*.

The written material accompanying the cassette is in the form of a confidential dossier, which contains several sheets of, apparently, essential information.

The first details German attempts to develop 'beam weapons' similar to the now familiar laser at a secret plant in the town of Rhinemunde. Just how close the Nazis were to success can be gauged from the report of a pilot who bombed Rhinemunde and saw "a searchlight so bright, it seemed to cut planes in half."

Further intelligence suggests that the group at Rhinemunde developing the weapon was headed by Ernst Reichsmuller and members were identifiable by their insignia — Valkyrie 17! A Waffen SS blueprint shows a gun-like electrical weapon bearing the legend 'Drakenfeur'.

Like many Nazi criminals, Reichsmuller escaped Allied justice but, together with his accomplice Heinrich, has been traced and followed by your agency — MI6.

This leads to the next dimension of this realistic game — a series of Ansaphone messages from an agent who has tracked Reichsmuller and his cronies across the globe. They plan to restore Valkyrie 17 to operation and found a new Reich. The last call is from a mid-European hotel and ends in a gunshot. Your agent's last words tell you your contact will identify himself by the words "The red kipper flies at midnight."

Now you are ready to load the 'A' side of the cassette and begin the game in earnest.

Already, though, you have been given much more information than is usual for most adventure games. The only companies I know of to produce anything so thorough are Level 9 and Infocom.

Level 9's background material is



Ram Jam challenges you to stop the Nazis — your dossier includes secret blueprints of a deadly weapon



excellent but generally of limited use in the game itself. Infocom produce support material that can only be described as brilliant and which is often needed to get anywhere with the game at all. The details supplied with *Valkyrie 17* seem closer to that supplied by Infocom — a point very much in their favour, as far as I am concerned. An obvious way to prevent or deter piracy is to produce items in the documentation necessary to playing the game which cannot be easily copied or reproduced by software thieves.

The game begins with you standing by the bar of the Hotel Glitz, next to a beautiful girl. There doesn't seem much incentive to leave but the girl is thirsty and you don't have a Grotnik to your name! The extent of your poverty becomes obvious if you try to leave the hotel but, for a secret agent of your experience, a little problem like that shouldn't hold you up for long. The skills of the masterspy often coincide with those of the burglar and every town has its shady characters — if you know where to look. Escape from the hotel is pretty easy, especially if you've played *The Count*.

Some locations have graphics and some are purely text. What I liked is that commands such as OPEN WINDOW produce the effect of the screen being redrawn to show an open window. The graphics are quickly drawn and very much a part of the game rather than memory consuming decoration. It is essential that you should examine all the pictures in detail and act on what you see as well as what you read. Text should be studied very carefully and you will note that, although all exits are generally given, this is not always so and a list of items in that location may or may not be.

Once outside the hotel things don't get any easier and the town, once you get to it, seems beautiful but deadly. There are quite a few red herrings or kippers even to catch you out.

The scenery includes views of Lake Bruntz, cable cars and pawnshops. Problems include brutal butchers, deadly pirhana and hidden snipers! It pays to have several different SAVED positions so as to avoid having to start again from scratch since the adventure seems to require certain actions to be performed at certain times if progress is to be made.

Overall, *Valkyrie 17* is a very "interactive" adventure which requires just about every sense except that of smell to play. I have spent many hours playing already and RamJam tell me I've completed about 10-15% of the adventure! The game is fun and I'm sure the unique and interesting plot will keep me at it until I've finished.

A final point worth noting is that the package includes a program to transfer the game to microdrive which greatly improves on the loading time of five to six minutes. I'm sure that we'll be hearing more from RamJam — I for one look forward to *Three Days in Carpathia*. □

Adventure	: *Valkyrie 17*
Micro	: *Spectrum 48K*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£9.99*
Supplier	: *Palace Virgin Gold, 69 Flempton Road, London E10 7NL*

Return to Eden

***Ken Matthews** ignores the angel with the fiery sword and visits Level 9's Eden*

AT LAST! A follow up to the brilliant *Snowball*. For those who can't wait to read the rest — yes, this one's brilliant too!

The game, Level 9's sixth epic, even has graphics, although, being the thoughtful people they are, Level 9 gives you the option of turning them off. Even BBC owners don't lose out because, since even Level 9 can't compress 240 locations and graphics into 32K (yet!) the text-only adventure is followed by the file containing the 200+ pictures to view at your leisure — just like your own gallery.

The background material is, as usual, superb and briefly describes the events of *Snowball* so you can get a feel for the trilogy without having played the first part.

The colony ship *Snowball* has entered the orbit of Eden off schedule, and without responding to the robot scouts who defend the city of Enoch which they have built to await the arrival of the colonists. The city is linked to a robot space station above the planet, responsible for planetary defence.

To you, in your guise of Kim Kimberley, this seems the least of your worries since videos of the saving of the *Snowball* seem to show you as the villain of the piece! The sentence is death but you manage to escape to Eden bemoaning the regrettable error. Unfortunately the enterprising crew of *Snowball* turn their engines on the spot you landed and you must act quickly to avoid being burned to a crisp.

More bad news — this act seems hostile to the besieged robots of Enoch and the *Snowball* becomes enemy to them as well as you. Acting with true forgiveness, or just in an attempt to set the record straight, it appears you must find and enter the city of Enoch and convince both robots and colonists of their respective errors.

Return to Eden

Level 9 Computing

The first part of the adventure is based on Harry Harrison's *Deathworld I* in which the hero is taken to the world of Pyrrus where every single plant and animal has set itself against the human city and mutates almost daily to produce deadlier creatures. Outside the city live the human "Grubbers" disdained by the city dwellers but seemingly at peace with the Pyrran wildlife — this provides a good clue as to how to survive in the wild.

Once you have survived the attempt on your life from the ship and learned how to become at one with nature, you'll find plenty to do before you can collect all the items you will need to ferry you to the next part of the adventure. Characters in the early part include the helpful see-bee, a familiar if rather large parrot, and the mysterious Ouija bird (usually seen flying at great speed up its own I/O port!). These shouldn't prove too much of a problem to the seasoned Level 9'er.

The problems I've encountered so far are typical Level 9 — diverse and cunning! The puns are just as amusing and the plot is one of the best. There's nothing I can say about *Return to Eden* that hasn't been said about other Level 9 classics, so go out and buy it — it's another winner from the Austins. □

Adventure	: *Return to Eden*
Micro	: *Commodore 64*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£9.95*
Supplier	: *Level 9*

Legend of the Axe

***Scott Duncan** joins the defenders of Dros Delnoch in Century's Legend*

LEGEND, Century's first venture into the adventure/strategy market (not counting *MUD*, that is) is of a familiar species: bookware.

As seems to be the norm with this sort of game now, product presentation is of a high standard, with the components enclosed in a very large video style box.

In the box is the book, at 384 pages the largest I have yet seen in bookware, a map, instruction booklet, key overlay, and tape with two different games on it.

I had read the book before, when it first came out (and was incensed to discover that Century have apparently cut its price from £4.95 to £2.95!), and, while I enjoyed it, felt that it was nothing special. It's a good, solid potboiler, and the basic plot is a hoary one — the heroic defence of a supposedly doomed fortress by a motley band of failures, who, forced to draw upon their innermost reserves, find moral salvation. As a result, I wasn't expecting much from the game. I was wrong.

To begin with there are two games, and both, in their own way are challenging. The manual, which is rather skimpy unfortunately, shows a certain lack of imagination in calling the first game, centering on Rek's adventures recruiting defenders for Dros Delnoch, the Role Playing Game, and the second, which covers the actual battle, the Siege. Somehow, I couldn't help feeling that some rather more evocative titles might have been chosen — especially as the first paragraph of the manual states grandly "you are about to enter the fantasy world of Drenai — a world of danger and high adventure — the world of LEGEND."

The quest game begins with the player, Rek, being summoned to the palace of Lord Abelayn where he is told that he is to succeed Earl Delnar as the next Lord Warden of Dros Delnoch. Abelayn suggests that Rek search for the legendary armour of the Earl of Bronze, and a "magic weapon of great power." At this point, the astute player will have noticed the first divergences from the book's storyline.

Time is actually the most important part of the quest game. You have roughly 90 days for your mission. By that time, you must have achieved your objectives and reached Dros Delnoch. Otherwise, the Nadir hordes led by their leader Ulric, who has a natty line in biting chickens' heads off, will sweep over the walls of the fortress and fall upon the defenceless (and rather spineless) Drenai empire.

Before you are allowed to set out, however, you must face the first test in a series of problems designed to combat tape piracy. This is nothing more than a check on whether or not you have the book. If you don't, woe betide you — you won't even leave Drenan, the capital city. Once the main part of the adventure is entered, it soon becomes clear that this is no classic two word input verb-nouner. Most of the decisions are menu driven, and, usually, once you have visited a particular place, returning is only a waste of time.

Let's assume that you follow the book's story as closely as you can, in which case the first place visited will be Graven Forest. Here, as in the book, you face a bandit in single combat. Combat in the quest is graphic. A large figure appears on screen — wearing a red tunic and a silly smirk — and waves his sword arm windmill fashion. He will stop in one of five positions, and you must select the appropriate parry and riposte within a very limited time span.

Unfortunately, it is at this point that the one major problem in the game raises its ugly head. The template supplied lists only your attack options; you have to refer to the booklet to find which keys defend against which enemy attack, and you have to memorise these.

I finally worked out a solution to this; I stuck five pieces of paper to the screen in the various attack positions, with the number of the correct defensive keys on each. As a result, I managed to survive a little longer than I did when I first started playing — but my TV looks like it cut itself shaving.

The template, which should be a game aid, is in fact a downright hindrance. It only covers six keys, and it's not really worth the effort.

As you progress through the game, you will face various rather more intellectual challenges. Some are open input questions, whilst others involve working out simple substitution codes, or mathematical problems — or even brain teasing riddles of the sort Gollum would have loved.

It's only after you have started your travels through the empire that the game begins to exert its charm — of which it has a great deal. In the limited time available to me, I got quite involved.

Some seasoned adventurers might turn up their noses at the game because of its menu driven structure, but I thought that it worked very well. Indeed, there are a great deal of potential adventurers who will see this as a good introduction to the field.

Incidentally, when you find the Cavern of Death, you will have to play through a mindless little arcade game, which involves ducking or jumping over arrows. It's important to avoid as many as you can, not merely because if you get killed you have to start again but also because the more wounded you are, the longer you have to rest for — and remember, time is vital!

If you are successful in recruiting characters to your cause, or in finding the Earl of Bronze's armour or the lost magical weapons, you are told that they will be waiting for you at Dros Delnoch. At the end of the game, you will be given a percentage measure of your efficiency. The better you do, the more troops you will have to face the Nadir.

On loading the Siege game, you will see a wall divided into 10 sections. This is only the first wall, and there are six in all. You have to deploy your troops along the wall in the most efficient way possible, before the Nadir attack.

When the Nadir hordes do start attacking, you will see them swarming over the battlements; your men are blue, their enemy red, on a yellow background. Below each wall section is a display showing the number of men defending and attacking. After each wave, you have the option of moving your forces around to reinforce weak spots, or of retreating to the next wall.

The Nadir attack three times a day, and will not fight at night (union rules it seems). If they fail to win at least half a wall, they will retreat when night falls.

It's exceedingly nerve racking watching the barbarians sweeping over your troops, and the decisions you must take require a fair amount of thought. While there may seem to be less for the player to do in this game, as opposed to the quest game, it is far more challenging. I must admit that, so far, I have been slaughtered mercilessly very soon.

Legend is a very competent game, and should do very well. It is, however, very expensive at £14.95. On the other hand, with the book and two games included, it is worth it, I feel.

Now perhaps if I could find the Earl of Bronze's armour, the magical weapon, recruit Druss and Joachim, work out what Bowman wants, help the sheriff of Riverdale build her bridge (non sexist game, this) and solve a few other problems, I might have a better chance . . .

Game	: *Legend*
Micro	: *Spectrum 48K*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£14.95*
Supplier	: *Century Communications*

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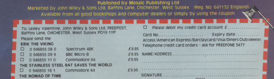
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Scott Adams' Classic Adventures

***Ken Matthews** continues his series of hint reviews of Scott Adams' adventures with a look at Voodoo Castle, The Count, Strange Odyssey, and Mystery Funhouse*

TO ADD to your Christmas presents this year we are continuing this series of hint-reviews of Scott Adams adventures with no less than four of these classics.

These reviews contain many hints to the more difficult parts of the adventures, as represented by the largest number of enquiries via these pages or the Adventure-line. Location descriptions and items with more obvious uses are omitted wherever possible so you can still get maximum enjoyment from these exciting adventures. You might like to play through the adventure with this at your side, or, alternatively, I hope this article will whet your appetite for at least one of the series of 12 adventures.

Voodoo Castle

Firstly, we will examine Adventure 4, *Voodoo Castle*, whose storyline was written by Scott's wife Alexis and, as Scott himself remarks, "for some reason seems to appeal to lady adventurers", although I found it a lot of fun too!

The game begins with you standing in an eerie chapel next to a closed coffin containing a cursed Count Cristo. It is your mission to lift that curse and restore the Count to normal life — can you read the inscription on his sapphire ring?

Beginning to explore the castle, you might first find a tantalising window that closes as you reach it and, outside, a raven whose message can't be heard through the glass. You'll need to be lucky to get through this one!

In the armoury you could get equipped in true adventurer style but the armour itself is just too heavy to move so you'll have to be less ambitious. Don't steal too much — try and keep out of jail.

Further afield, a kettle could move you to a fortunate end or you might be left in the dark if you've idoled about and not dusted things up a bit. The whole castle seems neglected — even the animal trophies seem about to fall off the wall, or perhaps you need to cut them off the wall to make it safe?

The whole game takes on a more sinister aspect as you find evidence of magical activity as well as some more conventional science. If you don't want to lose your life you'd best find something to hide behind and I'm sure I don't need to remind you of the dangers of smoking pot!

A quick, if risky, snack(?) could solve a growing problem or bring you closer to death! This may not be a bad thing however, and you might find yourself in clover if you see what I saw.

Discovering where to use the ring will chute you another part of the story. You find yourself facing a problem I'd call medium. Once solved it will give you a far better clue than I can here and gazing into a crystal ball could lead to transports of delight!

Finding somewhere dark to read the plaque you've collected is no problem — you did pick it up didn't you? — but the writing is too small to read. It seems you've forgotten your spectacles and you won't find a magnifying glass — don't go to pieces(?) — I'm sure you'll get round it somehow.

After a quick spin you should be able to stop the moaning by using the tools you've picked up. When you've restored the ju-ju man to life don't be frightened — hear what he's got to say before you run.

Examining the unstuck bag and its contents, together with Megan's advice, should set you up to finish this one off, but *Voodoo* is a dodgy business so make sure you have everything you need and follow the instructions precisely.



The Count

Scott's next adventure, *The Count*, is also in a supernatural vein and you begin, again, in a castle — but this time in bed — at mid-afternoon. Actually you are in sunny Transylvania at the home of its most famous resident — Count Dracula! You have been sent by the local townspeople to rid them of the nocturnal terror and woe betide you if you try to leave without completing your mission.

Wandering around, you might begin by visiting the bathroom for a bit of light relief before finding your way to the kitchen. There you will discover a solar oven that's too hot to enter and a dumb-waiter. If you stand and wait for it to talk, you'll wait forever — it's a lift!

After a few ups and downs you will have several useful items to your credit and be faced with two problems in the form of a locked door and a rather dark pit. The rings should give you a clue to the latter and a letter to the former but you'll need to have your wits about you to make a rope. You can't force your way through the door — a little more subtlety is called for — what's that noise? — you'd better answer the door-bell!

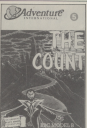
After reading the note and postcard you should be able to pick your way forward and enter the cupboard. You won't finish your quest in just one evening so you might consider putting your treasured possessions in a safe place before you fall asleep — eventually. If you can keep awake you might cast a little light on the subject of the oven.

If you haven't already you might take a little look outside your bedroom window before you retire and being a bit more adventurous — like you were in the dungeon — could help solve your filing problems tomorrow.

Oh No! — You've been bitten!! — by the looks of those marks it wasn't a mosquito! Still, it couldn't be avoided — even adventurers must sleep sometimes. You'll have to be quick though — go and see how ill you look! — make sure that pesky bat doesn't have the last laugh. You could do worse than wait for the postman since I'm sure you'll have found everything useful by now.

Smoking is usually bad for your health but in this case a little coffin' might do you some good. A quick pint might see you through another night but business should come before pleasure and you should bolt down to the crypt and finish off your filling — even if you have to work a little late.

You should awake a little less drained this time and feel up to the last step in your plan. At last you can strike the final ▶



blow and face the townspeople — you may be pleasantly surprised.

Overall, *The Count* presents new challenges to the adventurer and requires a little more lateral thinking than the first four. I feel it is the ideal introduction to Scott's later adventures which, intentionally, become increasingly difficult with more abstract problems being introduced all the time.

Strange Odyssey

The first of these trickier quests, *Strange Odyssey*, has a science fiction setting. You start in a scoutship crashed on a planetoid. Obviously, nothing works and you must explore this dismal chunk of rock to gather the items to aid your escape. You are better equipped than in most of Scott's adventures as the hold contains several items essential for your survival. It also poses a problem — the access hatch to the engine you need to repair has jammed in the impact. Nothing you own will shift it — you'll have to go outside.

Getting out will be no problem to even novice space cadets and, if you take a chance, you'll soon be safely down on the surface. Lost your bearings? Don't worry, the planetoid is very small — you're probably just going round in circles. Once you've got that sorted out and can't find anywhere else to go — get set and shift that blasted boulder somehow!

At last! A place with a bit of atmosphere and plenty to play with. You'd best learn how to manipulate things — one false move could prove fatal. After some pulling and pushing you should be glowing with pride but a gentle touch is needed before you'll get anywhere new!

You'll now have discovered several locations and I'll leave it to you as to which order you tackle them in, but don't panic — here are a few general tips to help you along.

You might start on nice soft ground near a jungle of rather wicked looking trees so be careful if you venture in.

Found a deserted zoo? The Ice-Hound looks pretty lean and hungry, so, if you're going to do anything with him, tranquilize him first.

How kind, putting him where he belongs — if you potter about he might lead you somewhere (double oriental?). If you are puzzled by a mound, go in or forget it — take your pick! You could get in a tight spot but you can always shoot your way out if you've been careful.

Looting a museum could be profitable and careful examination of all items always pays dividends. If the painting makes your eyes swim, find some sunglasses or similar!

A twist in the plot can ease the gravity of the situation and get you a couple more useful items.

If you've run short of air you can replenish it from a machine you'll find. All I'll say is that you need to push more than one button — make sure you push the right one first!

No doubt you'll soon have all your booty back in the ship but still won't be able to take off. A seemingly useless item might help you find the problem though. A final tricky twist by Scott? — just so! Perhaps thinking back to manipulating the rod will help with this one too. The final part is quite straightforward or upward so I'll leave you to sort everything out and complete the adventure.

Mystery Funhouse

In the last of this month's adventures, *Mystery Fun House*, you are cast as superagent James Bond, with a brief to recover some stolen plans hidden within the fun house.

The first problem is getting into the joint and Scott's little jokes, while amusing, aren't really helpful. The terrible tasting gum is, though, and, if you can branch out, helps you get the entry money — if my pun doesn't grate too much!

Equipped with your ticket and properly shod you may now stroll into the fun house and, almost immediately, find yourself in a maze — w(h)ew! No time wasted in dropping us in the deep end here!

A skeleton might look a little too real for comfort in this sinister sideshow but by now you'll be used to manipulating things and will soon get out.

You will discover a shooting gallery but don't waste time making a spectacle of yourself here — go to the funny mirrors if you want to do that — but, from the small room it's Not So Simple, Eh?

By now you should have a handle and be able to explore at will. You might do worse than pit yourself against a retractable ladder. Do yourself a good turn, then add a little spring to your step to escape. Roll out the barrel? Drinking won't help much but a little effort will add to your inventory of items!

Be careful with mermaids — they're rare so don't flush her away. Play up to her vanity and she could give you some real help. The only way out of this section is through the maze — again, Not So Simple, Eh?

A fortune telling machine — just what you could use at the moment but it's broken — you're on your own again. Mind you — take notice if you don't want to be a sitting duck later.

Things will be a little quieter near the merry-go-round and you'll be able to get on once it's stopped. Keep climbing, the exercise will do you good, but don't forget to look where you are going before you jump to any conclusions.

You should have done enough by now to leave the fun house and examine the car park a bit better. The grate should slide aside to let you in to the last part of your mission.

A sticky problem this next grate — with a sticky solution. It's a bit windy in the sewer so close the door before your match gets blown out, or worse! The last few moves are simplicity itself if you read the signs right in the fun house and I'll leave them up to you.

If you have any problems, phone the Adventureline on 01-646 4441. □

Trader to the stars

John Cook tests the controls of his new Cobra Mark III Combat-Trader in Acornsoft's blockbusting Elite



WAS IT the smoke from the burning console that was making my eyes water? Or maybe it was just the fact that the last Pirate shot had taken out over a thousand credits worth of cargo. In any case, I reflected, I was in trouble. Big trouble.

A sharp whiff of ozone from damaged circuits brought me back to reality. Shields down, energy low, a Bounty Hunter on my tail. A glance at the scanner showed he was no longer alone. Time to go.

Co-ordinates set, I activated Hyperspace to take us out of the system. The on-board display indicated my energy levels were approaching zero as the crash of laser fire on the hull told its own story. Then suddenly, silence.

I opened my eyes. We had made it to Walare — a high-tec, rich industrial world. My narcotics should bring a good price. Perhaps our little unscheduled diversion was not turning out so bad after all — assuming a Police Viper wasn't hidng in that oncoming meteor group of course . . .

The BBC B over the years (quite rightfully) has gained itself a somewhat staid reputation. This, plus the fact that ordinary mortals cannot afford the price tag of £400, has made it very popular with parents and schools. The reasoning is that if they can't play Invaders on the thing (and let's face it, most games for the BBC are pretty bad in comparison with, say, Spectrum games) maybe the kids might just get on with 'serious' programming.

Well, here is the bad news for killjoys everywhere. For thousands of people (myself included), the BBC is no longer a dinosaur of a microcomputer. It is no longer a microcomputer at all. It is the main systems monitor of a Cobra Mark III Paynou, Prossett and Salem Combat-Trader Spacecraft. In short, for the games-player, the BBC has come of age.

The instrument of this unexpected deliverance has come in the shape of a program called *Elite*, produced by Acornsoft of Cambridge. A masterpiece such as this is difficult to describe within existing parameters. It is a flight simulator. It is a 3-D 'star wars' type arcade game. It is a trading game. It is an ongoing role-playing future-world adventure. It is . . . *Elite*.

Somehow, two Cambridge undergraduates — Ian Bell and David Braben — have crammed a game of immense size (eight galaxies of 250 planets) and fair complexity into the BBC. Clever lads, these.

Marketing departments have long since found out that one way to sweeten the phsychologically bitter pill of paying over a tenner for a relatively small length of cassette tape, is to put it in a big box, with a pretty picture on the front.

Unlike some other similarly priced programs, Acornsoft have tried to make sure the punter is getting value for money by filling the box with additional assorted pieces of literature.

Weightiest and most important of all is the 64 page *Space Traders Flight Manual*. This is a well written, comprehensive instruction book on how to play the game, and should be memorised word for word. In a semi-documentary style (talking to you — the rookie trader) it goes through the controls and various aspects of play, finishing with a section on ship identification. The fact that this takes 64 pages says something about the complexity of the beast. Overall it is nicely laid out and quite readable.

Slightly less readable is the accompanying 48 page novella, *Elite — The Dark Wheel* by Robert Holdstock. This is routine Boy meets Girl meets Thargoid space opera, but is worth reading as it has a good feel for the background of the game, and includes a few hints on how to stay alive that little bit longer.

Also included in the package is a tasteful (!) poster on the subject of ship identification, a handy summary of the initially mind-boggling 48-odd controls, clear Loading and Saving instructions, an overlay for the function keys and a competition entry form.

Every time you Save, you are given a security code dependent on combat rating (Harmless to Elite) and bank balance. Each month, up to March 1985, Acornsoft are giving away £100 worth of software to the highest submitted entry. The top six will be fighting it out for an even greater prize next April.

It is refreshing to see a reward of less than the familiar five figure sums which have recently crept into fashion. *Elite* needs no such gimmicks.

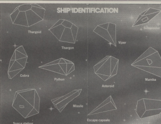
The program loads quite easily in a total of 124 blocks. After about 6 minutes, your computer will beep at you, display a rotating space-ship and prompts, 'Load New Commander (Y/N) ?' Say 'Yes' and type in your name (or you will start by being called Commander Jameson), press Return, Escape, Restart and you are away, teetering on the brink of addiction. Those without willpower or a few days to spare go no further . . .

You start off docked at the Coriolis Space Station orbiting the Agricultural planet Lave. It should be noted that as you travel from system to system, you never actually land on the surface of any planet, but dock with one of the orbiting Space Stations.

You are now in possession of a Cobra Mk III space ship, with a full fuel tank (enough for a hyperspace jump of seven Light-years), a forward firing, pulse laser, and three Lance and Ferman Seek and Kill missiles. You have a combat rating of Harmless and a legal status of Clean, together with a starting capital of 100 Credits. (F8 gives you this current information). From here, anything goes.

Roughly, in the game you have two aims; to make as much money as possible (by trading, bounty hunting or mining) and to increase your combat rating in an attempt to become an *Elite* trader.

The two aims are not unrelated, as to increase your combat rating, you will need to invest a considerable amount of money in extra hardware for your Cobra (Beam Lasers, ECM System, Extra Energy Unit), without which you are unlikely to trade successfully for long, as there are



many unscrupulous computer controlled characters whose only aim in life is to blow you out of the sky, only stopping to pick up your cargo afterwards.

If this seems a little unfair, don't worry. You have ample opportunity to do the same should you so wish although this type of behaviour tends to get the local Galactic Bill hot under the collar.

You also need to invest money in a Large Cargo Bay and Fuel Scoops to optimise your trading and scavenging abilities.

Shrewd

All these things will come in time, with a little shrewd wheeling and dealing and a steady hand.

All buying and selling is done when you are safely docked at a space station. It is simply controlled, using F1 (for buying), F2 (for selling) and F7 (to display market prices). With a total of 17 commodities to choose from, you are never short of choice, but selection of the correct items is one of the keys to success.

Having bought your goods, you now need to choose a system to visit, with a view to selling and making a profit.

You have on-board data banks on every star in the galaxy, even though you have a maximum jump limit of seven light-years at a time. A chart of the area within jump range can be displayed (F5) and by moving a cross over the desired target system using the cursor keys and pressing F6, you will get a potted biography of the same.

Economy (Agricultural/Industrial), Government Type (Corporate State to Communist), Tech Level, Population, Species, Gross Productivity and Size are all displayed.

Using a little good judgement, you should expect to convert your initial 100 Credits to 400 in four or five jumps. In general, to start off, sell food from low tech Agricultural planets to high tec Industrial systems, ferrying back computers or luxuries.

A few 'safe' trips like this build up the credits so you can soon buy extra hardware.

The manual gives guidelines on how the political bent of a system affects trading safety . . . ignore them at your peril. Unless you are armed to the teeth and well versed in the art of combat, life expectancy in an anarchic system can only be described as short, although entertaining.

You should also note the warnings about carrying illegal goodies, especially at the start of your trading career. There will be danger enough with local Pirate ships, so courting extra trouble with the Constabulary while inexperienced is unwise.

When you feel confident however, spectacular one-off killings can be made, particularly in Narcotics. If you make a habit of these dealings within a particular locality, however, you achieve Fugitive status, and become a target not only for the Police, but also Bounty Hunters. This does not make for a quiet or (for that matter) particularly healthy life.

Trading aside, the first time you load *Elite*, you could do worse than just undock (F0) and try out the new motor.

When in flight, Function Keys 0, 1, 2, and 3 give Front, Rear, Left and Right views from the ship, respectively. These views appear on the upper three quarters of the screen, the lower quarter being reserved for the scanner and on-board function gauges.

Workmanlike

The view of the outside world is shown in white '3-D' transparent line representations, similar to *Battlezone* or *Star Wars*. The illusion of movement is created by 'stars' rushing towards, beside or away from you, depending on your view at the time. Entirely satisfactory and workmanlike.

The lower part of the screen is dominated in the middle by the radar/scanner. It is presented as an elipsoid grid of red dots, with yourself in the focus. Other objects are represented by green flags protruding above or below the plane of the grid, depending on their altitude. Tucked away in the top right-hand side of the scanner is a simple homing device for pinpointing space stations within a system.

Flanking the centre scanner are various gauges showing the status of different onboard functions (shields, fuel etc) together with the missile display. These are all labelled in red and shaded in yellow. You get used to it!



The top three dials on the right show your forward speed, and rate of spin and pitch . . . no simple left, right, up, down here.

Movement can be controlled by keyboard only, or a combination of joystick and keyboard. The latter is probably a marginal advantage, as it gives you a free hand to do other things (target/fire missiles, hyperspace, eat and so on). In either case, what suits you or more importantly, what you get used to, is best.

Flying is difficult enough but just try docking. Approach slowly. Line it up carefully. A bit up . . . right spin a touch . . . Crash . . . Game Over . . . another pilot error bites the dust.

Persevere

All I can say is, persevere. Practice makes perfect, and thinking in three dimensions is a wonderful preparation for life. However, take care. Matching spins with the Coriolis 'letter-box' has a strangely hypnotic effect, as well as inducing Space Sickness in the weak of stomach.

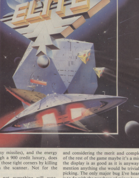
Spoil-sports can buy a docking computer for 1000 credits, and admittedly these speed the game up about 50%. As soon as you enter the Station Safety Zone (shown by an 'S' in the bottom right of the scanner), you press 'C' and hey-presto, you are immediately docked. Purists may frown on its use, but it certainly does save a lot of time.

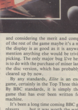
Once you have mastered docking, you might like to try Combat. More likely though, you will have it roughly thrust upon you when you jump into your first system. As The Book says . . . 'Don't Panic!'

If in doubt, fire off a missile (don't forget to target it first) which should kill off most small fry. You only have three to start with, so use them carefully. The Pulse Laser work quite well, but your target must be dead centre in the fixed cross hairs displayed on-screen. It has to be said, once you have Beam Lasers, you'll wonder what you did without them. Vipers go down like flies!

Either type of laser can be fitted in any direction (Front, Rear, Left, Right) giving a maximum of four available. If you can effectively use all four at once, congratulations . . . and would you like to come round and give me lessons. In practice, Front and Rear Beams are more than enough.

ECM will save you much bother (it explodes enemy missiles), and the energy bomb, although a 900 credit luxury, does get you out of those tight corners by killing everything on the scanner. Not for the faint-hearted.









Remember, not everything will automatically attack you, especially if you are Clean, so don't go looking for trouble unless you are prepared to accept the consequences. As a general rule, if it enters the scanner from the left or right it's a nasty, so take appropriate action.

Majestic

The first time I played *Elite*, I knew I had fallen in love. Not because of the graphics, or the sound effects, or even the majestic game concept. Simply because I kept crashing and getting shot up.

At last, a game that is challenging and which rewards practice and (dare I say) talent.

However, any game has its faults, and even *Elite* can be criticised. The main problem is that of speed. When there is a lot on-screen (particularly when something blows up) the action really slows down. It's annoying, but it must be remembered we are talking about the BBC machine here, and considering the merit and complexity of the rest of the game maybe it's a miracle the display is as good as it is anyway. To mention anything else would be trivial nit-picking. The only major bug I've heard of is to do with the purchase of miner lasers on the disc version, which has probably been cleared up by now.

By any standards, *Elite* is an excellent game, certainly in the Top Three this year. By BBC standards, it is simply the best game that has ever been written for the machine.

It's been a long time coming BBC games-players . . . but it was worth the wait!

PS *MUD* is dead . . . long live *MUSE* (*Multi-USer Elite*). Please? ☐

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Legend scores a Century

*Century Communications has attracted a great deal of interest recently — **Martin Croft** meets Richard Brockbank, Managing Director, and Simon Dally, Editor in Chief*

LEGEND, the story of the defence of the six walled fortress of Dros Delnoch by a motley band of no hoper heroes, is Century Communications' big Autumn launch amongst 20 software titles.

Based on the book of the same name by David Gemmel, published by Century Communications' parent company, Century Publishing, the package includes the book, just under 400 pages long, a map of the Drenai Empire and the surrounding lands, an instruction booklet, and a cassette with two games on it.

The first game follows Rek's quest to recruit defenders for the threatened citadel; the second is a strategy game of the actual defence. The better the player does in the first game, the more defenders will be lining the walls in the second, although the two can be played independently

Legend is solid evidence of the packaging skills that have made Century so successful over the last two and a half years: the physical quality of the components is superb, and the package contains an impressive collection of bits. Century has made a conscious effort to go against the usual minimalist approach of most software houses, just as Acornsoft has with *Elite*.

Century Publishing was formed in 1982, by Anthony Cheetham, former managing director of MacDonald Futura, with backing from City investors. There were seven computer books on the list which the company put out that Autumn. In March of 1983, Richard Brockbank was brought in to lead the computer side, and in October 1983 became managing director of Century Communications, which was set up specifically to publish computer books and software. In January 1984, Richard was joined by Simon Dally, who became Editor in Chief.

Richard's background is in law and management consultancy, and Simon has 11 years' experience as a book editor with major publishing houses. Both, however, have considerable computer expertise: as Simon says, "you can't bluff your way in computing."

Richard regrets an early missed opportunity: "I visited Acornsoft when they were just three people in Market Hill, Cambridge — I should have asked if they needed a legal adviser!"

He bought his first micro, a BBC B, in March 1982. "As a programming exercise, I wrote a typing tutor. I sold it to the BBC, and it was published as *Viewtype.*"

Viewtype, even though written in Basic, has had considerable success, being shortlisted for the Sunday Times/VNU Micro Computing Awards. The program has been converted for the Commodore 64 and will be published as the *Century Typing Tutor* in March.

"It certainly taught me a lot about author's rights and royalties," Richard says wryly.

Simon admits that he has "always been a gadget freak."

"I imported an Atari games console before they were available in this country, and I had one of the first chess machines.

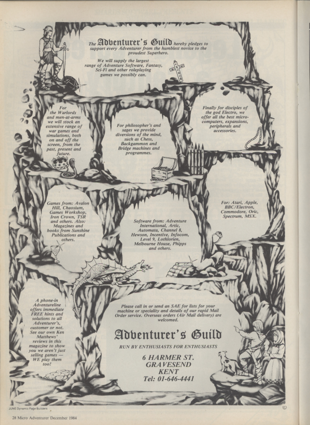
"I bought a ZX80, and assembled it with a soldering iron. I thought it was the most marvellous thing I'd ever seen — even though I had to send it back because I'd put it together wrong! About a month later I bought a Tandy Model 1."

Buying a Tandy introduced Simon to a large number of useful people. "Tandy users are a very friendly group — Tandy UK gave so little information that we had to help each other!"

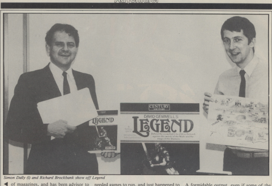
Simon was also very heavily involved in the games playing hobby; after chess and bridge, he moved into *Diplomacy,* and became a member of the National Games Club. One year, he came second in the national *Diplomacy* ratings.

As a result of his various interests and connections, Simon has published books by a number of well known gamers and computer buffs. At Weidenfeld he was responsible for publishing Richard Sharpe, who ran the NGC, and Nicky Palmer, who now edits *Flagship*, the specialist Play By Mail magazine.

Simon has written for a number ▶



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Simon Dally (l) and Richard Brockbank show off Legend

◀ of magazines, and has been advisor to *Acorn User* since its inception. He still sets the magazine's competition every month. every month.

"The biggest postbag I ever received was rather an embarassment," he recalls. "Usually the prize is around £20 of software, but one month the editor offered £1200 of hardware without telling me. As a result I had to wade through 8000 entries — all programs!"

Among the many people Simon got to know were a number of players of *Multi User Dungeon*. Simon decided to have a look at this remarkable game.

Richard comments, "it was quite clear that Simon was hooked from the moment he was able to dial into *MUD*. He'd come into work bleary eyed from being up half the night. I was tolerant, and let him carry on."

The result of this tolerance is that Century has signed a marketing deal with the authors of *MUD*, Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw.

Simon already knew Richard Bartle from his games playing, as Richard was editor of one of the best of the 'Dippy Zines', the small circulation (around 100 usually) amateur fanzines in which people played *Diplomacy* and other games by post. Richard Bartle's magazine was called *Sauce of the Nile*, and Simon still has issue 16, in which the schoolboy editor bemoaned the fact that, as his A level grades were bad, he had to go to Essex instead of Exeter.

"It's strange to think that if Richard had done better in his A levels, there would be no *MUD*," Simon muses.

Serendipity struck again — Compunet, the Commodore networking system, needed games to run, and just happened to use the same type of mini computer as *MUD* was originally written on, a DECsystem 10. The result is — or should be when the bugs are ironed out — that *MUD* will be available to subscribers to Compunet.

Compunet, however, is, according to Richard Brockbank," only a small part of the marketing plans for *MUD*."

Century is still looking for their own mini (either bought or rented) to run *MUD* on. At the same time, plans are in hand to update *MUD* and develop alternate scenarios. The basic architecture is, according to Richard Bartle, "just a teleconferencing system." As a result, it can be adapted swiftly to other scenarios. *MUD* is swords and sorcery, but there is no reason why a *Multi User Universe* cannot be created, allowing the same sort of interactive role playing by modem in space; or, for that matter, political and strategic games of any sort.

Another proposal, according to Richard Brockbank, is *Solo MUD; "MUD* is an excellent adventure in its own right, even when you play it on your own," he says, "and we are working on spicing up the mobiles — the computer controlled creatures and characters in the game — to give players an idea of what playing the real thing would be like."

MUD has gained Century an enviable amount of attention already, even before it is officially running on Compunet. But Century will not be resting on any laurels, as *Legend* shows.

In 1982, the company published seven computer books; during 1984, it will have published 55 books and 20 software titles. A formidable output, even if some of the software titles are cassettes that accompany books.

Sometimes in 1985, the company will launch *Scramble*, a strategic game of the Battle of Britain.

In *Scramble*, which has been designed by Nicky Palmer, the player is in charge of the Ops Room, and from the stream of information flooding in must decide where to intercept German attacks, and with how many planes.

At later stages in the game, pilots will become tired, and attacks may have to be let through for lack of fighters to intercept with.

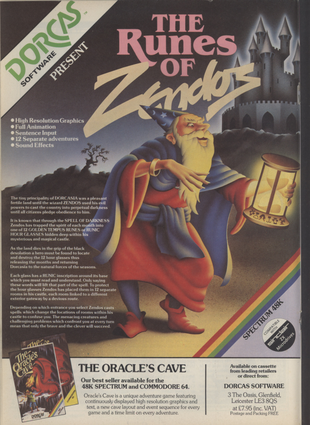
When something dramatic happens — as in total defeat — the player will be summoned into Churchill's presence. Churchill will apparently be graphically depicted on screen, complete with cigar.

Century obviously hope for a great deal from *Scramble*, and from *Legend* as well. Whatever the response to these two games, Century Communications' high profile recently cannot have done its parent company any harm.

In fact, Century Publishing is planning on joining the Unlisted Securities Market, where a number of software houses have found their fortunes recently. *The Bookseller*, the book trade's weekly magazine, estimates the parent company's 1984 turnover at £5m.

Other companies are looking at multi user games, but Century have stolen a massive lead, according to Simon Dally.

"You can call something multi user," he claims, "but nothing you do can match *MUD*'s 25000 hours of play testing over four years." □



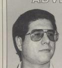
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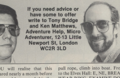
"THE FIRST IN INTERACTIVE MULTIPLAYER ADVENTURE GAMES....."



ADVENTURE HELP



If you need advice or have some to offer write to Tony Bridge and Ken Matthews, Adventure Help, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2R 3LD



MOST OF YOU will realise that this magazine is prepared nearly a month before it actually appears and because of this the Helpline is also at least one month behind. Unfortunately the Adventure Contact Column has fallen even further behind due to the huge number of queries coming in and the small amount of space available. To make up for this and start 1985 with a clean slate we are answering ALL outstanding enquiries this month. You will see that there are far too many to mention each of you by name but thanks for your interest — it helps us give YOU what you want to see.

The Hobbit has certainly caused most problems this year but we are printing solutions for nearly all the major problems of the game below and to avoid clogging this column by repeating them through 1985 we will *not* be printing any more! If you are still stuck please send in a SSAE with your question for a personal reply or get a copy of Melbourne House's *Guide to Playing the Hobbit*.

First, to escape the Goblin's Dungeon: Wait until Thorin turns up then get him to open the window and carry you west. Then, SW, D, N, SE, E, (TAKE RING), N, S, W, SW, (ANSWER RIDDLES), N, SW, N, SE, W, N, D, S, W, E, (OPEN DOOR), U, E, E. To cross the Black River: Look across river, throw rope until it lands in the boat, pull rope, climb into boat. From the river to the Elves Hall: E, NE, BREAK WEB, N, WEAR RING, EXAMINE DOOR, WAIT until door opens. To escape into the river: Wait until butler leaves then slip into cellar wearing the ring. Open and climb into a barrel. Close it and wait. To get Bard's help: Carry him to the little steep bay and wait until door opens. Enter hall and tell Bard to shoot dragon. To avoid the pale, bulbous eyes: Move once in the direction of travel, wait twice, move once in the direction of travel.

Moving on to Channel 8 (Digital Fantazia).

Golden Baton: To take the Baton throw the dagger in the lake.

Wizard of Akyrz: "Say Ravens" to store treasures and wave wand to rise in well.

Time Machine: To escape the Sphinx, jam the lever with the rock.

Ten Little Indians: Dial 1983 to open the safe in the station. Examine crates twice to see rope. Use the trowel to dig in the mud. The wall safe opens when all ten statues are on the stand.

Circus: The snorkel syphons petrol from the generator. The clown helps erect the net — in the right place. You need slippers to walk to the tightrope safely. "Fill tank" gets the car ready to go.

Next, Infocom's *Zork I:* To pick up the bar you must drain the reservoir to quieten things down. To enter Hades you must exorcise the spirits with bell, book and candle. The maze must be thoroughly mapped to discover the grating and the thief's lair. Remember, all eight points of the compass plus up and down are usable. Kill the thief in his lair.

Level 9's series next.

Snowball: To escape the Nightingales, N, PRESS ANY 3 BUTTONS, S, U, U. Nightingales don't enter rooms on this level. To enter the Habidome you must get the code by waking a crew member. You need to crack the mortuary colour code to find the right coffin. Check the video viewer. The codes are different each time you play.

Dungeon Adventure: To avoid the hand, throw the ring into the room first. To avoid the rat, throw the rancid potato at it.

Colossal Adventure: Above ground, go east from the building then south to the picnic area, then south again to the grate. To pass the snake drop the bird next to it. To get a light to the Plover room, say "plover" at room 'Y2'. You must be robbed for the pirate's chest to appear E, NW from the column in the maze.

Lords of Time: Give Narcissus a mirror to get a lodestone then use that to get the keys from the garden shed. In the pool of water, go W, W, S, D to return to clock. To get rid of the caveman throw the stone club at him. Pour the petrol next to the pile of wood and light it to drive off the mammoth. He will leave a fur coat and a tusk. To open the door to the invention room "say Eureka"; to leave "say James Watt".

In Quicksilva's *Velnor's Lair:* To cross lava, hold the statuette and say "tiamat" then cross bridge. Extinguish torch before going north from the giant's lair into the swamp. To pass the sharks, drop armour, use trident, enter pool, east, leave pool.

With Hewson's *Quest:* To enter the Castle Oops, unlock door with long key then "open south", "go south". The maze lies west and south of the wide road. Like all mazes, the forest must be mapped thoroughly.

To avoid being killed when you grab the gold in *Invincible Island* — run!

In *Golden Apple* use "on lamp" to avoid tripping in the dark.

Moving on to Acornsoft adventures.

In *Sphinx Adventure:* Kill the ogre with the sword — you will lose it. Kill the dragon with your bare hands. The mouse lies on the far side of the incredibly boring and pointless maze of iron tunnels — you'll need some cheese to catch it though. To get out of the serpent in the lake — "light matches".

On to Pete Killworth's excellent *Philosopher's Quest:* To pass the portcullis, rub the amulet, then jump north. The kennel marks the presence of an invisible dog — try "get dog".

In the same author's *Castle of Riddles:* To pass the bear, wait at the bottom of the passage until the bear is there, then N, NE, NW, N. To map maze, wave the rod — it emits different coloured smoke in each room.

HAVE YOU BEEN staring at the screen for days, or given up in disgust, stuck in an adventure whose problems seem insurmountable? Adventure Contact may be the answer. This column is designed to put adventurers in touch with one another. When you're stumped, a fellow adventurer may be able to help — and you may be able to solve other people's problems. If you are having difficulties with an adventure, fill in this coupon and send it to Adventure Contact, Micro Adventurer, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2H 7PP. We will publish Adventure Contact entries each month in this special column.

Micro ....

Adventure ....

Problem ....

....

....

Name ....

Address ....

....

Scott Adams has caused a few problems (as ever!).

Pirate Adventure (or *Cove*). To open the door in the pit, feed the crocodiles with the fish then use the keys from under the rug in the flat.

Secret Mission (Mission Impossible): To defuse the bomb, drop the bucket of water in the rest room. Go to the bomb, cut the wire, bring the bomb to the bucket and drop it. Get the bucket and pour water. To enter the reactor room, open door and then push hard.

The Count: To move the Dumb Waiter, raise and then lower. In another location, you can tie the sheets to the Flagpole, and then climb down.

The Hulk: Wave fan to blow bees away. Bite lip in dome near ants then examine baseboard. Eat the egg to stop it destroying the Bio-gem.

The chase for Incentive's video recorder has hotted up with the release of *Final Mission*, but for those still stuck in *Mountains of Ket;* avoid the goblin by moving till you've lost him, then double back. To enter the Skull you must wear the wizard's hat, cloak and beard. To pass the zombie, drop all except sword and wand, wear armour and ring, then go down.

Heroes of Karn: To get rid of the Pirate and Spider, play lyre; say to Khadim, Attack pirate with dagger.

Valhalla: Drapnir is in a cave in Hell.

Knight's Quest: The Spell Book is in the Dragon's Cave — first feed dragon. This will make a new friend! Then climb to ledge. To get through the Cleft, drop all. Then send dwarf.

Ship of Doom: How to open the glass cover. What to do with the ice block? Point sonic at cover. When ice melts, kill girl.

Pimania: How to find the Green Door, and what does the little fish signify? You need a certain combination of two gifts — experiment! And the Little Fish are — red!

Colditz: How to cross the Parcels Office a second time — is there a way through the Tunnel behind the Bunk? Go North from the Office, get wire cutters. Then return and get floor board. To get through the Tunnel, prop up the roof with the floor-board, and dig with Spade.

Wrath of Magra: To avoid dying of thirst, sleep until the pub opens.

Zodiac Adventure: To get Key from schoolroom shelf, use ladder. Cut grass in Garden and look. Then cut wire on ceiling.

Madness and Minotaur: Mushroom is found two floors down from the entry floor. To kill the Hydra, tie it with the rope. In the Music Room, play flute and hold the parchment to see the Ledge. Then use rope to climb ledge.

El Diablero: At the Magic Pool, gaze pool. On the next level, enter the Shack, and then break bowl — examine the Mat closely.

Mindbender: In Computer Room, run the computer, and type 2017 to get password, then 5. In shower, remove uniform, take shower (no, this won't result in shower being added to your inventory, nice idea though it may seem!) then wear uniform.

Urban Upstart: To get out of Jail, bide your time. To get out of Hospital, You need a disguise. Make sure you have protection from the rain. Milk may have an enervating effect, although the football fan may appreciate something a little stronger!

The Adventure Contact seems to be working well, as far as Contacts are concerned — we've had many letters from adventurers, saying how fantastic the response has been from other players willing to give help. This is very encouraging — remember, too, that if you are stuck somewhere, someone else, perhaps someone who is asking for help, may be able to help you out of an earlier situation. Don't forget, however, to include a SSAE when writing off for help!

Needless to say, we can't play every adventure released and so we would like any help you care to give on the following adventures:

Commodore 64: *Demon Knight, Token of Ghall* and *Underworld of Kyn.*

BBC and Electron: *Kingdom of Hamil, Program Power* and *Wheel of Fortune.*

Spectrum: *Podzelski.*

MTX 512: *The Caves of Androzani.*

English Civil War

***Ivor Benstead** refights the Civil War with help from Red Shift's new wargame*

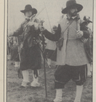
THIS AUTUMN has seen a heavy crop of strategy games for just about every popular micro. Red Shift, which was at one point leading the pack in this area with releases like *Rebelstar Raiders* and *Apocalypse*, has contributed three titles; *Timelords*, *Islandia*, and *English Civil War*.

As a dedicated board and tabletop gamer who fell in love with *Rebelstar Raiders* at first sight, I was delighted to be asked to review *English Civil War*, as I had high hopes of it. Unfortunately, my hopes were largely unjustified.

First impressions were good — but then I was only looking at the box art. The standard Red Shift heavy duty cardboard box is superbly ornamented with a picture of a Cavalier standard bearer trying hard to rally his troops.

The box contains the cassette and instruction manual, which I set to reading after *RUNning the cassette. I was quite impressed at first, because a great deal of effort appears to have been taken. The instructions are well written and laid out, and there is an interesting appendix at the back covering the causes of the war, the organisation of military forces of the time, and the weapons used.

English Civil War is a two player game, with one player moving all his units, followed by the other player. The objective is to capture the opposition's fort. I couldn't help feeling that the two player nature of the game marks a certain laziness on someone's part, as well as a lack of appreciation of the market.



While player A is moving, player B is bored stiff and vice versa. This game would have been far better with even a very basic computer opponent. As it is, it's dull. Two player micro wargames will only succeed when each player can use his own micro, with the two being linked — if we can have *MUD*, it shouldn't be too hard to do.

Unfortunately, there has been a rather important omission; nowhere in the instructions are you told how to move units or how to fire them.

To set the record straight, a phone call to Red Shift elicited the information that movement is via the cursor keys (which I had worked out) and that to fire you must press the copy key, followed by the left, right, or forwards cursor key depending on the required direction of fire (which had foxed me completely).

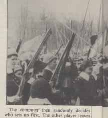
By this time the program had loaded. You begin by choosing how loud you want the sound effects; I would advise setting it around five.

You must next choose from three different army types. All three types of army have eleven units. The first has a preponderance of pike and cavalry, with five and three units respectively, two units of muskets, and one artillery battery. The second has three each of pike musket and cavalry, and two artillery batteries. The third has four units with muskets, three of cavalry, two of pike, and two batteries of guns.

Supposedly, type one armies were used at the beginning of the Civil War, type two at the end, and type three not at all. The booklet says that type two armies represent "the majority of English Civil War armies of the mid-17th Century." Personally, I'd always thought the Civil War ended in the 1650s. Type three armies are apparently from "the end of the 17th Century and the age of Marlborough" — at least 30 years after the Civil War ended!

It would have been interesting if the game allowed two differently composed forces to slog it out, but it doesn't — the choice is for both players. This means that both armies are identical, which removes half the fun of wargaming.

The last choice that has to be made before actually getting to deploy units is how many woods to have. Since woods cannot be entered or fired through, the higher the number you choose, the less playing space you have available. You can, however, knock woods down with cannon fire.



The computer then randomly decides who sets up first. The other player leaves the room. Units are deployed by moving the cursor to the right place and hitting return.

Each player can set up in his own third of the board.

The map, which is yellow, is divided into squares which are offset so that each is adjacent to six others. The troops are rather nice — graphic depictions of men seen from above — and are in red for the Parliamentarians and blue for the Royalists. Woods are green.

Players take it in turns to move or fire all their units, choosing which unit to give orders to first by pressing the Space bar. This cycles through all that sides' troops in turn. When the required unit is flashing, it can be moved or fired.

Every unit is allocated a number of moves and turns. Each move will either cause it to advance one square in the direction it is facing, or, if desired, and armed with muskets or artillery, fire. Each turn will cause it to change facing by 45° left or right.

The actual mechanics of movement and firing, and the accompanying on-screen graphics are the best part of the game. Troops surge forwards, or pepper the opposition with musketry.

What you win on the swings, you lose on the roundabouts though; each unit is formed of four ranks of four men. If an entire file of men is killed, then subsequent shots along the same axis will miss completely, even though three quarters of the target unit may be still standing. It's frustrating to watch your carefully sighted artillery fire find the only gap in an otherwise packed body of men.

The other form of combat in the game is hand to hand, which takes place after movement and firing. Adjacent units of different sides knock blue murder out of each other. Artillery are about the worst in melee, and cavalry which charge are the best.



Units lose men literally — the figures disappear from the screen. When the last man is gone, the unit ceases to exist.

There were no major bugs that I could find, but that does not detract from the basic fact that the game is uninteresting. I played it five times, and used each of the three army types at least once. Every game degenerated into a mindless slog after the first move. The playing area is small enough to begin with, and is unreasonably cramped with any woods; to cap it all the units start too close together.

The basic problem seems to be a lack of effort or thought on behalf of whoever commissioned the game, rather than on the programmers' part. Technically it is very competent, and does what it sets out to do. It's also very pleasant to look at. But challenging or interesting (to a seasoned gamer) it's not. □

Wargame	: *English Civil War*
Micro	: *BBC B, Electron*
Format	: *Cassette*
Price	: *£9.95*
Supplier	: *Red Shift*

Photographs by Kevin McLoughlin, supplied by Partizan Press, publishers of ***English Civil War Notes and Queries***

LEGEND

25 copies of Century's new two part Spectrum adventure strategy game must be won



Just answer these six questions based on famous sieges and post off the coupon to:
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London WC2H 7PP

1 What destroyed the walls of Jericho? ______

2 How did the Greeks enter Troy? ______

3 In what year did the Turks take Constantinople? ______

4 Where was Chinese Gordon killed? ______

5 Who commanded the Mexicans at the Alamo? ______

6 in what book is Minas Tirith besieged? ______

Name ______

Address ______

Tie breaker — in ten words or less

What do you look for in a strategy game? ______

Eye of Bain

Adventure *Eye of Bain* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£6.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Artic Computing.*

THIS GAME loads with a dazzling 'front page', making full use of the Spectrum's limited range of colours, and suggesting an interesting game ahead. After pressing several keys, and just as I had decided the program had failed to load properly, I noticed "Press Enter" tucked away in the middle of the screen (in a speech bubble!) and off I went.

You assume the identity of Tarl, a mighty warrior (what else) seeking the legendary Eye of Bain, a priceless treasure hidden in a temple and guarded by a nasty tribe of Alvanians. You have already had one attempt at nicking the jewel, but you tried to enter the temple without the permission of the great god Bain (you're clearly not *that* mighty!) and the angry villagers tied you up in a hut and left you to rot.

The temple is close to the hut (just through the grass door, in fact) but you are unable to go straight back there because of the fact that the villagers won't let you! Never mind, it would have spoilt the game if they hand't objected! You therefore have to find some other way out of the hut.

Graphics are optional — to obtain them (there is one for every location) you type DRAW or LOOK, and ENTER to return to the text. It is easy to forget to 'call up' the pictures, or even to purposely avoid doing so to save time, which would be a pity because the graphics are stunning, and easily comparable to games costing over twice as much. They are quickly drawn and painted too, and just as colourful as the loader.

Off-beat

Many companies seem to take an almost sadistic pleasure in deliberately (it seems) ignoring the obvious, commonly-used adventure-game terminology and including off-beat, unusual commands of their own. Artic are clearly no exception — on typing OPEN DOOR I was told that this couldn't be done; eventually I realised that I had to input GO DOOR or ENTER DOOR.

However, full marks to Artic for including LIST *and* INVENTORY. When one is constantly flitting from game to game it is easy to keep typing the wrong command.

The script in the game is different and pleasing to the eye, and the sound effects as you type in your commands are rather nice for once. Another rarely-used feature, which adds to the sense of realism, is the way the objects visible in each location disappear from the text as you TAKE or GET them (again, both commands are accepted).

The program doesn't have a HELP facility, which is irritating (although the word is recognised), neither can you obtain a SCORE. However, none of the problems I have encountered so far are exceptionally complex — the pattern is the usual one of visiting the right places in the right order to obtain certain items to give to certain characters to enable you to receive more items to visit more places (phew!).

Nevertheless, it isn't always easy to work out who wants what — for instance, the ape obviously needs to be given the bunch of bananas, but I have no ideas as yet what the desert nomad with a penchant for slave ladies is after. I was certain it was whatever was hidden in the beehive (would you believe honey?), but after spending some time working out how to stop the bees stinging me to death, and finally crossing the desert with my precious load without dying yet again of dehydration. I was most peeved to discover that this particular nomad at any rate doesn't have a sweet tooth. If he hadn't killed me immediately I would have eaten the infernal stuff myself.

Shapeless

I think maybe the black shapeless beast at the bottom of the well probably has whatever it is that the bloodthirsty nomad wants, but I haven't so far discovered what the beast wants either — perhaps the beast wants what the nomad has, or then again, maybe they both want the pile of wood I can't seem to get my hands on . . . then there's the captain of the pirate ship who keeps clasping me in irons and forcing me to remain a galley-slave for evermore . . .

In the meantime, the black shapeless beast keeps erupting into grey flame and refusing to let me examine his hidey-hole, and the desert nomad continues to lunge at me in a most uncivilised manner with his deadly scimitar . . . perhaps I should introduce them to each other.

In conclusion, a familiar story-line, but with enough interesting variations-on-a-theme to make it a worthwhile buy, not least of which for the graphics. **JL**

EYE OF BAIN

ZX Spectrum 48K

SOFTWARE INVENTORY

What's on the way in the adventure world — if you have a new adventure, war game or real-life simulation which you are about to release send a copy and accompanying details to Software Inventory, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2R 3LD

Beta Minor

Adventure *Escape from Mansion Beta Minor* **Micro** *BBC* **Price** *£6.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Brittania Software, Cardiff.*

AFTER approximately three moves this game died. It took some time but I traced the problem to a surplus semi-colon within the main program and restarted the game. (I have spoken to the company and they assure me I must have been given a corrupted copy.)

The game scenario is that you have crash-landed on the planet Beta Minor. Your objective is to buy another rocket from the inhabitants of the plant so you may return to Earth. The currency of the planet is 'fruit' and you must search the Mansion to find some.

As this Mansion appears to be very earthlike with kitchens, swimming pools and a Bar-B-Que it somewhat lacks the Star Wars atmosphere.

The game is mainly in coloured text. However some messages are long enough to stretch over one line and these tend to split words in half and continue without the benefit of colour! The program is eager to please so should it fail to recognise one of your commands it examines the first letter of the word and should it begin with N,S,E,W, U or D it will obligingly move you. As there are a surprisingly large number of words in the English language beginning with these letters you should enjoy a round of the Mansion before you know it!

The game is written in Basic and is agonisingly slow. Whilst delving around inside I could see that little or no attempt has been made to store the data in any efficient manner. Perhaps this is the reason the same messages are used in reply to situations which really require alternate replys. For example, on entering the swimming pool, while wearing my aqualung, I was curtly informed that "As you can't swim you have drowned". Further investigation showed that this message is given for all swimming pool

fatalities. In fact I appear to have drowned because I was carrying a heavy object. It's a fine point but add together all these and other points and you have a poorly presented, awkward game.

The picture on the cassette cover is quite nice! **AM**

Karos

Adventure *Gateway to Karos* **Micro** *BBC B* **Format** *Cassette* **Price** *£9.95* **Supplier** *Acornsoft, 104 Hills Road, Cambridge.*

YOU MAY remember that sometime in the distant past *Castle of Riddles* from Acornsoft was introduced as a competition. The person who was able to complete the adventure within a stipulated time would receive a handsome price.

At that time I was adventuring in Level 9's *Adventure Quest* and was used to quick responses to my instructions. It came as a great shock on loading *Castle of Riddles* to find how very slow the responses were. This soporific experience was in mind while loading *Gateway to Karos*.

You start in an overgrown garden, by an arrangement of three stones which form a gateway. Through this gateway lies another world, the island of Karos, where once lived the Wizard Khoronz who ruled with the aid of the magic Talisman. Your objective is find this Talisman and other treasures. Your search will be long and difficult and you must return to this gate and somehow pass through to complete your task. What a delight — instant responses from the word 'Begin'. With 250 locations and over 60 objects to be found, used, worn or kept this was good news indeed.

This text only adventure will hold your interest all the time and keep you on your toes. Location descriptions are good and interesting. You will be able to ask the inhabitants of Karos questions to help you in your quest; some will respond readily, while others will need your help first before parting with vital information. Some will have to be bribed or bought.

Whilst on the subject of buying, certain objects have to be purchased and to this end you need to find money and plenty of it. The objects which you buy are used to help carry out some of your tasks — like the boat.

Now apart from sailing round parts of this island, avoiding the rocks and the Kraken, you will have to negotiate forests and swaps, moorlands and mountains, mines and mazes and Khoronz's workplace under Mt Pykon, volcanic of course.

Gateway to Karos
for the BBC Microcomputer Model B

There are some very difficult and mindbending problems to solve, some of which seem totally irrational. I suppose this is acceptable as we are in alien territory.

Finding uses for some of the objects is not easy, nor is finding the right object to remove the nasties like The Griffin, Red Serpent and a Dragon to name but a few. The choice of solving some of the problems either by force or magic is very interesting and this facility seems well used in this adventure.

There is of course the answer book in a sealed envelope contained in the packaging and the temptations are great. It might be better to let someone else have charge of this, who is willing to let you have just a few hints as you require them. If you are new to adventuring you will be tearing open this envelope in a very short time.

The usual Save / Restore facility are available as in all good adventures, and is much needed in this one. While not a classic adventure by any means, it is a good all round text only game which should keep even the experienced adventurer occupied for quite some time. Packaging and instructions are good, so at £9.95 it is good value.

Now if I get the string to tie it to the copper wire which is connected to the brass plate and then jump on the plank which I have put over the anvil I might reach the ledge and turn on the light . . . of course I forgot to wear the gloves.

Crash course

Simulation *747 Flight Simulator* **Micro** *Commodore 64* **Price** *£9.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *D.A.C.C. Ltd, 23 Waverley Road, Hindley, Wigan, Lancs. WN2 3BN*

I HAD intended to master this game before putting pen to paper. Unfortunately, my lack of aeronautical flair has precluded me from performing a successful landing, despite several hours of trying.

The challenge of this simulation is, first of all, to get airborne, which is not too demanding. Then, by referring to the map in the manual, a destination airport has to be selected from the list of six. Once chosen, the object is to fly there and land.

Navigation is fairly straightforward and entails merely keeping the nose on the correct compass heading.

The manual recommends a lot of landing practice and suggests repeated flights between Heathrow and Gatwick, which is the shortest available route, (six or seven minutes flying time).

Throughout the simulation, the emphasis of the screen display is, sadly, much in favour of the instrument panel. The view through the cockpit window is very elementary. A blue section for the sky and a green section for the ground both remain totally static, regardless of the bank or climb situation of the aircraft. The only indication as to the attitude of the plane is the smaller, artificial horizon on the instrument panel.

The shortcomings of the pilot's view however, are amply compensated for by the excellent response of the instruments to keyboard and joystick commands. These are too numerous to list, but the obvious ones are, of course, joystick for ailerons and elevators, '+' and '–' for engine thrust and 'F' to extend wing flaps to reduce stall speed.

Undoubtedly, the most difficult task is maintaining the correct glide slope and eventual touchdown. Even aided by illuminating arrows showing the correct approach path, the closest I have come to landing is about one and a half miles from the threshold. At this range the runway is shown as a rapidly approaching series of dots in perspective, which all too quickly vanish from the screen as I overshoot, or plummet into terra firma.

Being an optimist by nature, I have studied carefully the procedure to follow after the rear wheels have touched down — namely apply down elevator, engage reverse thrust, extend spoilers fully, increase throttle to full power, steer down runway centreline, apply brakes gently — there's nothing to it really!

To summarise, I enjoy the game enough to patiently await the 10 minutes loading time and will definitely continue to persevere for that elusive perfect landing. **LJ**

Ice bound

Adventure *Ice Station Zero* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£1.75* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *8th Day Software, 18 Flaxhill, Moreton, Wirral, L46 7UH*

AN ADVENTURE game for just £1.75 sounded too good to be true, so I was naturally sceptical when I read 8th Day's catalogue which described their batch of six *quill*-designed adventures as "presenting a unique standard of quality rarely found in adventure games."

The games have been graded in difficulty ranging from beginner to advanced levels. *Ice Station Zero* was rated as a beginners game, so I loaded this one first, thinking it wouldn't take very long to review. As it turned out, I met with one maddening problem almost immediately and despite following the hints sheet to the letter, I couldn't make any further progress.

The scenario is clearly derived from Alistair Maclean's thriller *Ice Station Zebra* and like a thriller grabs your attention right from the beginning. Your mission is to prevent a mad terrorist attempting to destroy New York from a remote Arctic research station. You have to cross the vast Arctic wastes in order to reach the station and kill the terrorist before he detonates the bomb. Along the way you have to deal with snow drifts, crevasses, hungry wolves and bears, and even a Yeti.

My difficulties began when trying to cross the ice floe, only a few moves away from the start location. At the outset of the game you can hear wolves howling across the ice, so you know you must get away as soon as possible. I found a gun hidden on a sledge and took it with me, expecting to be able to defend myself against them.

It was when I reached the edge of the icefield that the wolves prevented me from travelling any further. According to the hints sheet you must jump across the icebergs after firing the gun to disperse the wolves, which seemed simple enough. But then I discovered that every time I fired they disappeared only to return a fraction of a second later, with the result that I was killed off every time the bullets ran out.

I did once manage to escape the wolves but for some reason decided to quit and start again. Since then I've been kicking myself for not continuing while I still had a chance.

I had hoped to say that if you were new to adventures and didn't want to spend a lot of money, *Ice Station Zero* would be a good one to sample first. This assumes, however, that you don't find yourself in the same predicament as me — in which case you could be in for several hours of frustration. **JF**

Superior games

Adventure *Gideon's Gamble and Lost City* **Micro** *BBC B* **Price** *£7.95* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Superior Software, Regents House, Skinner Lane, Leeds LS7 1AX.*

I HAVE heard good things about another of Superior Software's adventures, *Startrek*, so I was pleased to have these two to review. However, I am afraid to say I found both *Gideon's Gamble* and *Lost City* rather limited games.

Both use the same format and structures. Both use Mode 7 and are therefore essentially text adventures. Some of the locations are enhanced by Mode 7 graphics which, on *Gideon's Gamble*, are quite attractive but on *Lost City* add nothing to the game. Similarly there is a token use of sound in a few locations, but I found *Lost City's* attempt at a 'rushing stream' only a poor imitation.

Gideon's Gamble has been given some imagination and care and does contain some difficult problems. It has anticipated input which is not part of the puzzle (try stealing something) and offers some intriguing objects including a pogo stick and a jelly mountain.

Lost City however, has very little to recommend it. Unless I am missing something it is a very linear puzzle, with a simple series of difficulties each of which must be solved before proceeding to the next. More annoying is the minimal logic of the game. Every time you want to cast some light on a location you must light the torch irrespective of whether it has been lit previously. If you do not 'WEAR BOOTS' in the right location, you cannot go any further, even if you put them on in any other location. The program quite happily accepts the instruction to give the bottle to the dwarf, but it remains in your inventory of possessions.

Compared with *Lost City*, *Gideon's Gamble* is quite enjoyable. It is not as linear as *Lost City* and has rather more thorough logic, though only just. Even so it seems flawed, as when it expects you to realise that, if you are in a farm, there must be a farmer who can be bargained with. Until you realise this the spade you find is totally immovable. This kind of jarring of reality does not please most gamers and it will cause real difficulties for the novice adventurer, for whom I guess these offerings are intended.

Both programs are in BASIC and can easily be listed. Though there is nothing wrong with the coding they show that only the simplest of adventure techniques have been used, techniques which should be familar to most readers of this magazine. As an example, in both games the command 'Look (object name)' results in 'The view is wonderful'. It is elementary programming to flag words for objects and words for locations so that an appropriate default message is given, just as flags could be set to cover the boots and torch examples above, but instead the programs merely test if a particular word or phrase has been used in the correct location and if not, hard luck.

However some care has been taken with presentation. Colour codes are used to render the display more attractive and the function keys have been programmed to give some of the most common commands. I could find no misspelling though there is some odd punctuation and grammar (as in almost every other adventure!). **NW**

Warp 1

Adventure *Warp 1* **Micro** *BBC* **Price** *£7.95 each* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *Superior Software, Regents House, Skinner Lane, Leeds LS7 1AX.*

"ACTION STATIONS — Mr Spock to the bridge". "Warp factor One Scotty". Yet again *Enterprise* is off to boldly go where innumerable computer games have gone before. The *Star Trek* game is an evergreen strategy battle played against the dreaded Klingons across the endless quadrants of the galaxy.

This version has updated the original game with the use of a split screen of Energy Levels, Shields, Damage, Galaxy Map and a Short Range screen. During the navigation commands the short range screen displays the movement of the Enterprise with an amusing display of graphics and sound effects. The battle sequence uses a cross-hair sight which directs your phasers at the Klingon ships. The movement of your ship, plus the positioning of the aiming sight, is by the use of the cursor keys. By using these keys, in conjunction with the COPY key to FIRE, the game author has ensured that only a left-handed octopus will be able to play!

Unlike the original game where the player has no previous knowledge of the enemy's position, this version provides all the locations in the galaxy map at the beginning. Owing to this peculiar addition there are very few surprises awaiting you. The Klingons are surprisingly tame as they only fire in retaliation to your phasers and should you ignore them they are quite happy to ignore you — live and let live I say!

For amusing graphics and sound this game is an improvement on some of the Trek games already available, but it doesn't have an ounce of strategy in it.

The Klingons should have the tranquilizers removed from 'their Gargle-Blasters and permitted to get a touch more blood-thirsty. This is obviously a game for the nimble fingered, young in heart — and head! **AM**

Cuddles

Adventure *Cuddles* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£1.75* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *8th Day Software, 18 Flaxhill, Moreton, Wirral, L46 7UH.*

CUDDLES is subtitled "the game for BIG kids", though it's more innocent that you might have thought. You are a baby who escapes from the nursery with your one-armed teddy and set out in search of its missing arm. Eventually, after a fantastic adventure through a magical world, you return to the familiar surroundings of the nursery to be comforted by your nanny.

You'll meet a host of famous characters from nursery rhymes, fairy stories and children's books — the mad Hatter, Little Miss Muffet with the spider, the Snow Queen, Cinderella and more. You can even take a trip in the space shuttle and travel to the moon, which turns out to be made of cheese.

The game sustained my interest, as I never knew who or what I would meet next on my travels. The fairly generous descriptions are also concise but atmospheric: "You stand before a drawbridge leading up to a great portcullis. A clockwork soldier stands outside his sentry box . . . He looks resplendent in his scarlet uniform."

Some more care should have been taken in editing the text, however. I spent some time trying to get away from nanny because I'd spelt a word as it ought to have been spelt and not in the way that the program expected it to have been.

One nice touch is that if you return to the nursery after escaping from nanny, the game is brought to an end with "You didn't move fast enough. Nanny says it's time for bed . . ." Then the Spectrum plays a few bars of a lullaby and the game is over.

I'd recommend *Cuddles* to anyone who doesn't want to grow up. After all, it's a third of the price of other *Quill*-designed adventures and should provide a few happy hours far from reality. **JF**

Quann Tulla

Adventure *Quann Tulla* **Micro** *Spectrum 48K* **Price** *£1.75* **Format** *Cassette* **Supplier** *8th Day Software, 18 Flaxhill, Moreton, Wirral, L46 7UH.*

YOU might not have gathered this from the title, but *Quann Tulla* is a science fiction adventure in which you take on the whole might of an evil galactic empire. The name comes from the spaceship, the *Quann Tulla*, on which you are the sole survivor. You are about to be attacked by approaching alien vessels. Eventually, if you survive long enough, you may succeed in leaving your ship via a teleportation device. This will set you down on a remote planet for a final confrontation with the forces of evil.

Although the game begins, like so many space adventures, on a marooned spaceship, the atmosphere is vividly conveyed.

Like the other games in Eighth Day's series of cheap adventures this one was written with the *Quill*. Although the *Quill* format is recognisable the game should appeal to a good many adventurers at beginner and slightly more experienced levels. For the uninitiated side two contains a menu with options for the storyline, playing hints and descriptions of Eighth Day's other games. The hints are general and don't refer to any specific game, so no secrets are given away. This might seem unnecessary for the more advanced player but newcomers will find them very useful.

You can get a hints sheet which is a good deal more forthcoming than the help facility in the game as that only warns you not to use excessive violence.

This is a game with all the ingredients that a Sci-Fi fan could wish for: robots, force fields, secret missions, etc. It's certainly well worth £1.75, providing as much fun as some adventures I've played which cost three times the price. **JF**

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The hound of Erin

***Julie Lewis** enters the world of celtic mythology and explores the land of Tir Na Nog*

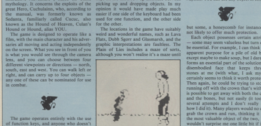
THE BOOKLET which accompanies this tape tells newcomers to the land of *Tir Na Nog* that "a complete solution may take months, perhaps years . . .". This is well within the bounds of possibility — so far I do not seem to have progressed very far at all.

Tir Na Nog is described by the publishers, Gargoyle Games, as "a vast interactive Adventure", based on Celtic mythology. It concerns the exploits of the great Hero, Cuchulainn, who, according to the manual, was formerly known as Sedanta, familiarly called Cucuc, also known as the Hound of Heaven, Culan's Hound or Hound, alias YOU.

The game is designed to operate like a film, with the main character and his adversaries all moving and acting independently on the screen. What you see in front of you is what you would see through the camera lens, and you can choose between four different viewpoints or directions — north, south, east and west. You can walk left or right, and can carry up to four objects — any one of these can be nominated for use in combat.

The game operates entirely with the use of function keys, and anyone who doesn't already possess a keyboard overlay is advised (by me) to buy a pack along with the game. It is very easy to forget which key to press, especially when facing a nasty — you may have time to pick up the axe lying nearby and quickly nominate it, but if by mistake you drop your feldspar there probably won't be time to defend yourself. The problem is that each line of keys is used for a particular function. For example, the keys on the third row up alternate between picking up and dropping objects. In my opinion it would have made play much easier if one side of the keyboard had been used for one function, and the other side for the other.

The locations in the game have suitably weird and wonderful names, such as Lava Flats, Dubh Sgorr and Glasmarsh, and the graphic interpretations are faultless. The Plain of Lies includes a maze of sorts, although you won't realise it's a maze until it occurs to you that you keep returning to the same place over and over again.



There are, apparently, hundreds of objects scattered around the Land of Youth, although personally I've only encountered a handful. The objects are to be found in a variety of places — buried underground, hidden in caves, guarded by a formidable beast, or just lying by the wayside. You can use any object in combat, but some, a honeycomb for instance, are not likely to offer much protection.

Each object possesses certain attributes — some may seem valueless but turn out to be essential. For example, I can think of no apparent purpose for a pile of old bones, except maybe to make soup, but I daresay it forms an essential part of the solution. The disembodied face that keeps throwing stones at me (with what, I ask myself?) certainly seems to think it worth protecting. Then again, he could be trying to stop me running off with the crown that's with it. It is possible to get away with both the crown and the bones, but not easily (it took me several attempts and I don't really know how I did it). Many players would no doubt grab the crown and run, thinking it to be the most valuable object of the two, but it wouldn't surprise me one little bit if it was really the bones . . . ▶

ARTIC ADVENTURES RISK THE UNKNOWN

NEW



The aim of this adventure is to try and survive a nuclear attack. You do this by building a nuclear shelter or either by using the Town Hall shelter. To enable yourself to surrive, once the bomb has gone off, you also have to collect rations and at the same time try and avoid the riots. All this has to be done within a limited time period, before the bomb goes off.

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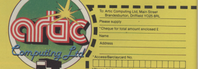






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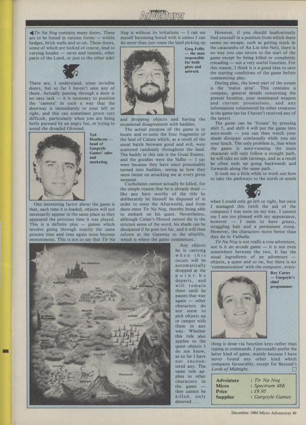
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◀*Tir Na Nog* contains many doors. These are to be found in various forms — within hedges, brick walls and so on. These doors, some of which are locked of course, lead to varying locales — caves and tunnels, other parts of the Land, or just to the other side!

There are, I understand, some invisible doors, but so far I haven't seen any of those. Actually passing through a door is no easy task — it is necessary to position the 'camera' in such a way that the doorway is immediately to your left or right, and this can sometimes prove very difficult, particularly when you are being hotly pursued by an angry foe, or trying to avoid the dreaded Olcweed.

Ted Heathcote — head of Gargoyle Games' sales and marketing

One interesting factor about the game is that, each time it is loaded, objects will not necessarily appear in the same place as they appeared the previous time it was played. This is a definite plus — games which involve going through exactly the same process time and time again soon become monotonous. This is not to say that *Tir Na Nog* is without its irritations — I can see myself becoming bored with it unless I can do more than just roam the land picking up

Greg Follis — the man responsible for both plots and artwork

and dropping objects and having the occasional disagreement with baddies.

The actual purpose of the game is to locate and re-unite the four fragments of the Seal of Calum which, as a result of the usual battle between good and evil, were scattered randomly throughout the land. The baddy in this tale is the Great Enemy, and the goodies were the Sidhe — I say were because they have since presumably turned into baddies, seeing as how they seem intent on attacking me at every given moment.

Cuchulainn cannot actually be killed, for the simple reason that he is already dead — like any hero worthy of the title he deliberately let himself be disposed of in order to enter the Afterworld, and from there enter *Tir Na Nog*, thereby being able to embark on his quest. Nevertheless, although Culan's Hound cannot die in the strictest sense of the word, his shade can be dissipated if he goes too far, and it will then reform at the Gateway to the afterlife, which is where the game commences.

Any objects he is carrying when this occurs will be automatically dropped at the point he departs, and will remain there until he passes that way again — other characters do not seem to pick objects up or tamper with them in any way. Whether this rule also applies to the quest objects I do not know, as so far I have not encountered any. The same rule applies to other characters in the game — they cannot be killed, only deterred . . .

However, if you should inadvertently find yourself in a position from which there seems no escape, such as getting stuck in the catacombs of An Lin (the Net), there is no way you can return to the start of the game except by being killed or completely reloading — not a very useful function. For this reason, I think it is a good idea to save the starting conditions of the game before commencing play.

During play, the lower part of the screen is the 'status area'. This contains a compass, general details concerning the present location, your nominated weapon and current possessions, and any information volunteered by other creatures in the game (so far I haven't received any of the latter).

The game can be 'frozen' by pressing shift 5, and shift 4 will put the game into auto-mode — you can then watch your shade dissipate continually while you eat your lunch. The only problem is, that when the game is auto-running the main character will only follow a straight path, he will take no side turnings, and as a result he often ends up going backwards and forwards along the same path.

It took me a little while to work out how to take the pathways to the north or south when I could only go left or right, but once I managed this (with the aid of the compass) I was soon on my way. I cannot say I am too pleased with my appearance, however — I seem to have greasy, straggling hair and a permanent stoop. However, the characters move better than they do in *Valhalla*.

Tir Na Nog is not really a true adventure, nor is it an arcade game — it is not even somewhere between the two. It has the usual ingredients of an adventure — objects, a quest and so on, but there is no 'communication' with the computer, everything is done via function keys rather than typing in commands. I personally prefer the latter kind of game, mainly because I have never found any other kind which compares favourably, except for Beyond's *Lords of Midnight*. ☐

Roy Carter — Gargoyle's chief programmer

Adventure	:	*Tir Na Nog*
Micro	:	*Spectrum 48K*
Price	:	*£9.95*
Supplier	:	*Gargoyle Games*


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LINEFEED

Computer books, game books, science fiction and fantasy books reviewed.

Two dimensional universe

Book *The Planiverse: Computer Contact with a Two-Dimensional World* **Author** *A K Dewdney* **Publisher** *Picador* **Price** *£2.95 paperback*

FORGET all these simulations of mere World Wars and Empires — how about simulating an entire universe? Well, not an entirely *normal* universe — rather a 2-Dimensional one!

This idea has been explored before, in the 19th Century by Edwin Abbott, in his book *Flatland*, and at the start of the present century by Charles Hinton, in his *An Episode of Flatland*, among other more recent efforts.

A K Dewdney has taken up the challenge and produced an exhaustive look at the practicalities of living in a 2-Dimensional world. His story starts at an unspecified, North American university in 1980. Dewdney, a lecturer in Computer Science, set his students to creating a two-Dimensional universe on the faculty's computer and populating it with flora and fauna. This takes, at first, the obvious route, with the students creating a sort of in-depth video game — and all proceeds well, although the project tends to take up rather too much time. One day, however, one of the creatures answers back . . .

Unwittingly, Dewdney and his students have opened up some sort of gateway into a parallel, two-Dimensional world — the planet they have "discovered" is called Arde, and the being they forged contact with is Yndrd (who inevitably becomes known as Yendred).

The Earthlings have the good fortune, as have the authors of *Erewhon*, *Gulliver's Travels* and so on, to meet the one person in this world best placed to give them all the details of the scientific, artistic, political and social life on the planet Arde. As it turns out, this is not by accident.

Yendred communicates with Dewdney's group by thought transference and it is as well that the Ardean's main recreation appears to be meditating for long periods. The astonishment, on both sides, is extreme, but contact has been made at the right time, as Yendred has fortunately just decided to take a trek across his native land of Punizla, to find the secret of Life, the 2-Dimensional Universe, and everything, which he is sure he will discover in the other Ardean country of Vanizla.

Much of the book is now taken up with an explanation of the 2-Dimensional world, and detailed explorations of the practicalities of living on a flat, vanishingly thin, surface. These details are completely absorbing — just try to imagine everyday life! In order to present as unbroken a surface as possible to travellers (who would otherwise have to clamber *over* houses (it would be impossible to go *round* them!), Ardeans live underground. Indeed, a complicated social ritual has built up, in which those of younger years, or of one sex, allow those of older years, or the other sex, to walk over them. To sit, Ardeans simply have to squat down on the cushion of air trapped between their legs. Battles are fought by the simple process of the front-most warriors on each side slogging away at each other — when they are dead, the next pair move up, and so it goes, until there is just one soldier left atop a huge pile of bodies! The text is liberally scattered with detailed drawings of 2-Dimensional steam engines and pianos, sharks and other aspects of Ardean life.

But this is not simply a dry text book. The story of Yendred and his adventures and loves is completely absorbing and thrilling.

Is all this real? Well, it would be churlish to ask — the book is an exciting read, during which the reader becomes totally involved with Yendred and his Odyssey; and the climax is absolutely shattering.

After finishing the book, I was left with a nagging feeling that will always be with me: if only I could unlock the secrets of this parallel universe.

Tony Bridge

Short cut

Book *A Shortcut Through Adventureland* **Authors** *Jack Cassidy, Pete Katz, Richard Owen Lynn, Sergio Waismann* **Publisher** *Datamost* **Price** *$9.95*

AN ANSWER to a maiden's prayer? It certainly is if, like me, you have been trying to rescue her in *The Wizard and Princess*, or have problems with other American high-res adventures.

This book, from Datamost, is quite simply 170 pages of maps and solutions for no less than fourteen adventures from six American software houses. The games covered are characterised by being graphical, multi-disc adventures, generally available only on machines like the Apple and Atari. Because of the limited market for these games, hints have appeared rarely, if at all, in magazines like this. The recent moves by US companies to produce software at affordable prices in the UK may mean that Commodore versions will arrive soon, and those of us who have been struggling with Infocom's brilliant adventures have noticed a remarkable upswing in the number of hints appearing since the games have been translated for the Commodore. So, for many, the arrival of this book for less well-known adventures is a Godsend. For those of you with problems, the adventures covered in the book are *Death in the Caribbean*, *Transylvania*, *Mission Asteroid*, *Mystery House*, *Wizard and the Princess*, *Cranston Manor*, *Ulysses and the Golden Fleece*, *Time Zone*, *The Dark Crystal*, *Blade of Blackpoole*, *Escape from Rungistan*, *Sherwood Forest*, *Mask of the Sun* and *Serpent's Star*.



For each adventure there is a standard map of connected boxes. These are small and contain no descriptions but some are numbered. These numbers refer to hints and solutions given in the accompanying text. Generally, the hints I've tried are detailed enough to get you by, but some need a little interpretation. Personally, I'm glad that they've left something to do occasionally as there is a temptation to just breeze through each game.

There is little else to say, except to mention the excellent illustrations that break up the text and if anyone knows where I can buy a copy of *Time Zone* let me know!

Ken Matthews

BOARD WALK

New board games and role playing games reviewed

Cath Bilgora reviews some recent role playing games

Star Trek

Game *Star Trek* **Format** *Roleplaying game* **Publisher** *FASA (printed under licence in UK by Games Workshop)* **Price** *£9.95*

IT'S TAKEN a long time for THE offical RPG, with a few false starts and unofficial publications. At last it is here, and it's not bad.

For your £9.95 you get three books. The first is the *Starfleet Officers Manual*, which covers the creation and training of the Starfleet Officers and the direction of their adventure actions. Included in this book are two sections for the absolute beginner, the Introduction and the Glossary.

The *Cadet Orientation Sourcebook* looks in depth at the *Star Trek* universe. This covers all aspects including governments, races, fleet equipment and organisation. A history of the universe is included also for those whose knowledge of *Star Trek* is a bit sketchy.

The third book is the *Game Operators Manual*. This gives you all the information needed to run the adventures, plus guidelines for designing and presenting scenarios. It also gives you rules for action aboard ship and on planets.

The main problem that *Star Trek* will have is trying to convince committed *Traveller* players to move over to it while at the same time trying to contend with the hack and slash attitude of *D&D* players.

There are already a host of scenarios, supplements and additional material to back up *Star Trek* so it will not disappear quickly.

Star Trek is a worthwhile game and, as a fan of the series at least, I must recommend it.

Elfquest

Game *Elfquest* **Format** *Roleplaying game* **Publisher** *Chaosium* **Supplier** *Games Workshop* **Price** *£19.95*

ELFQUEST is undoubtedly one of the best regarded comic books from the USA. The lavishly illustrated twenty issue series by the Pini's is published quarterly.

This new RPG centres on the fragmented groups of elves in their struggle for survival, their search for the secrets of the ancestors, and the quest for the location of the semi-mythical, 'High Ones', their forefathers.

The elves not only have these tasks to confront them, but also their hereditary enemies, the trolls and the emergent mankind.

The game system, not surprisingly, is based on the *Runequest* system, and the character abilities mirror the system strongly.

Typical to any system formed from *Runequest* is an emphasis on the story and the general atmosphere.

The first book, the *Elfbook*, deals with the creation of the characters, and looks at their background and culture, and their relationship to the World of Two Moons.

Each of the different groups of Elves has distinctive magic, and a brand of the overall culture. In this section in particular you can see that the authors have expanded the information from the comics in a stylised manner.

The *Gamesmaster's book* covers the multitudinous flora and fauna, weather, poison, fire and illness. Included in this book are two starter scenarios and a nicely detailed and indeed open-ended more complex one.

The real bonus is the masses of illustrations which litter the text. Various other standard RPG paraphenalia, maps, dice, and Chaosium advertising sheets, are included, all pretty much what one has come to expect in a boxed set.

In conclusion *Elfquest is* a rather good game, definitely a must for admirers of the comics. For others......well, the basic system is sound, and the world of the Elves an interesting, if twee, one — but the price is rather high.

Raiders!

Game *Indiana Jones* **Format** *Roleplaying game* **Publisher** *TSR* **Price** *£9.50*

FIRST impressions sometimes mar your further thoughts of things; often they serve to heighten your worst fears!

Indiana Jones, from box art to text, is thoroughly disappointing.

The game includes a 64 page booklet, which covers characters and all the rules, which are very simple though poorly presented. You can only play *IJ* or one of his sidekicks, and *IJ* cannot die (probably an edict from Lucas Films).

There is an eight page Evidence File, which includes clues on the scenarios; an *Indiana Jones World Map*, awkwardly printed on one of the playing map boards; a quite useful Gamemaster's screen with all the important tables, and on the other side the Adventure Backdrops, highly difficult to use.

Finally included are 3D figures (cardboard cut outs), depicting characters, stand up walls, doors and traps.

If you really want to roleplay the 1930's then simply use the far superior *Call of Cthulhu* rules or TSR's own *Gangbusters*.

Hobbit role playing

Game *Middle Earth Roleplaying* **Format** *Roleplaying game* **Publisher** *Iron Crown Enterprises* **Price** *£6.95 book, £11.95 boxed set* **Supplier** *Games Workshop*

MIDDLE EARTH ROLEPLAYING, or *MERP*, continues the high quality of production that we have come to expect from the designers of the classic *Fellowship of the Ring* boardgame. The system is billed as being suitable for either beginners or experienced roleplayers, but really it is a little complex if you compare it to the competition like *Basic D&D. MERP's* attention to detail and logical system does put it head and shoulders above the more antiseptic generalised TSR roleplaying game.

The main rulebook runs to 104 pages, following the almost standard format for organising a roleplaying rulebook, basics first, running into the advanced rules, and finally the tables and charts.

The range and types of races available are impressive, covering all the choices and variety of Middle Earth.

Interestingly the designers have included a section on map movement together with a detailed system by which the Gamesmaster can generate random events; this section is perhaps one of the most useful and innovative as the worst criticism people always level at roleplaying games is the void which exists between adventures. To complement the random tables the rules look in depth at the various geographical zones and offer suggestions for each area.

In conclusion, if you are an admirer of J.R.R. Tolkien's world then *MERP* is a must. The boxed set (soon to be the only version available) also has a map booklet, dice and a counter sheet.

Classified

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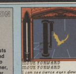

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COMPETITION CORNER

Tony Roberts tests your skill — send your answers to Competition Corner, Micro Adventurer, 12-13 Little Newport St, London WC2R 3LD







Forty Spectrum owners can win copies of one of Hill MacGibbon's new adventures, King Arthur's Quest or Aztec — Hunt for the Sun

The Kraken wakes!

THIS MONTH you, Tisch's unwilling guest, must boldly go and retrieve the K Ring to adorn the fingers of your mistress, the ancient black dragon (isn't it lucky she has 26 fingers?)

The illustration below shows a plan of Kraken Hall, which is the location of this, the eleventh Runic Ring. As usual, Tisch has found out as much as she can about the traps defending the Ring, which she assures you are very simple.

There is just one entrance to Kraken Hall (at the top right), and you can walk through the rooms of the hall to the one containing the Ring, and then leave by the only exit (which is in the same room as the ring).

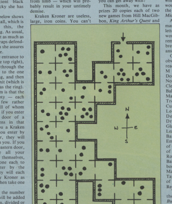
The only problem is that the rooms aren't empty — each one contains a few rather stupid Krakens, all of whom do the same thing: if you enter by the northern door of a room, the Krakens in that room will give you a Kraken Kroner each. If you enter by the southern door, they will each take one from you. If you enter through the eastern door, they will divide all your Kroners among themselves, and then return one each to you. If you enter by the western door, they will each give you as many Kroner as you are carrying, then take one each from you.

In other words, the number you are carrying will be added to, subtracted from, divided or multiplied by the number of Kraken in the room, depending on which door you enter through.

Of course, being Kraken, and therefore monsters, if the number you are carrying won't divide exactly, or if you are not carrying enough Kroner, the Kraken will rend you limb from limb — which will probably result in your untimely demise.

Kraken Kroner are useless, large, iron coins. You can't carry more than ten, and you could do with carrying as few as possible out with the ring. What is the least number that you can get away with?

This month, we have as prizes 20 copies each of two new games from Hill MacGibbon, *King Arthur's Quest* and *Aztec Hunt for the Sun*. That means that there will be 40 winners for this competition. If you enter, remember to say which of the two games you would prefer — take a look at the review in November's *Micro Adventurer*.



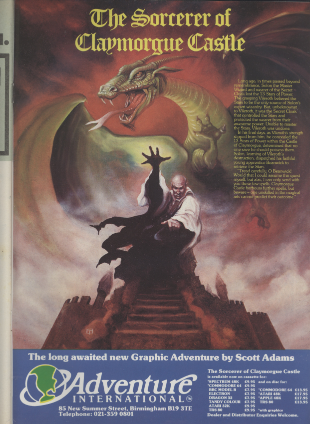
As a tie breaker, see how many words of four or more letters you can make out of the words 'King Arthur'. But remember, that's only the tie breaker — you also have to answer the main question!

October's competition was obviously an I point for many readers. The winners were: M Walbridge of Beaminster, Don Durr of Warnham, James Norton of Streetly, Frances Clenton of Great Barr, Patrick Baladi of Sutton Coldfield, Mark Watts of Burton-on-Trent, Alistair Moat of Cumbernauld, M Ingham of Leeds, Mark Rawson of Denmead, G' Quinn of Drogheda, W Adair of Glasgow, Anthony Brewer of Leatherhead, W Redman of Barking, Steve Pother of Emeryville, California, G Orr of Gillingham, Mark Clements of Bromley, Robert Burgess of Rotherham, Ewan Watson of Balbeggie, M Green of Gainsborough, M Griffs of Poole, Mark Slade of Isleworth, John Taylor of Tottenham, A Fisher of Clapham, Jerry West of Reading, and Phil Tomaselli.

They will all be receiving their copies of *Dungeon Builder* (or *Pub Quest* and *Quest for the Holy Grail*).

The winners of this month's competition will be announced in the February issue.

Don't forget to include your name and address.


The Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle
Long ago, in times passed beyond remembrance, Solon the Master Wizard and wearer of the Secret Cloak lost the 13 Stars of Power. The grasping Vileroth believed the Stars to be the only source of Solon's expert wizardry. But, unbeknownst to Vileroth, it was the Secret Cloak that controlled the Stars and protected the wearer from their awesome power. Unable to master the Stars, Vileroth was undone.
In his final days, as Vileroth's strength slipped from him, he concealed the 13 Stars of Power within the Castle of Claymorgue, determined that no one save he should possess them. Solon, learning of Vileroth's destruction, dispatched his faithful young apprentice Beanwick to retrieve the Stars.
"Tread carefully, O Beanwick! Would that I could assume this quest myself, but alas, I can only send with you these few spells. Claymorgue Castle harbours further spells, but beware – one unskilled in the magical arts cannot predict their outcome."
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TURN US FROM WHAT SEEMS TREMENDOUS AND
THUS TO ZOBS GREAT TREASURE SEND US.
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